University of Alberta

Reading Dunayevskaya: Engaging the Emergence of Marxist Humanism, 1930 - 1955

by

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Dedication

For Sandeep, without whom ideas would not matter.

Abstract

The works of Raya Dunayevskaya (1910-1987) have existed on the margins of "academic" Marxist philosophy. Over the course of her lifetime she painstakingly worked out a philosophy that she named Marxist Humanism; however, rigorous engagement with her ideas has held little sustained interest among Marxist scholars. This study argues Dunayevskaya's ideas and philosophy have contributed to the development of Marxist philosophy writ large and to the realization of a philosophy of freedom. In order to make this argument, I return to the formative period of Dunayevskaya's philosophical development and examine her writings, letters, and political activities between 1930-1955, with particular emphasis on her studies of Hegel, Marx, and Lenin.

Over the course of nine chapters, I argue that Dunayevskaya is a critical thinker whose works make an important contribution to our understanding of both the historical development of capitalism and its form today. Basing herself in Marx's philosophy, Dunayevskaya sought to grasp the meaning of the Hegelian dialectic expressed through Absolute Negativity and its implications for revolutionary praxis. She generated the foundation for challenging the inhuman relations of capitalism and realizing a new human society, which she termed a New Beginning. That is the full implication of her work to recover Marx's humanism.

The years covered in this study (1930-1955) span the development of state capitalist theory, the identification of non-worker/revolutionary subjectivities, and the return to Hegel as the source of Marx's dialectic. My reading of

Dunayevskaya's works employs an objective/subjective, dialectical approach to her theoretical writings, co-written texts, and personal correspondence. The study concludes at the point when Dunayevskaya established a new organization, News and Letters, and began to project Marxist Humanism as theory and practice unified, that is, as a philosophy of revolution.

Acknowledgements

This project could not have been completed without the support and encouragement of many people – and saying "thank you" seems inadequate when compared to the level of assistance I have received from so many. Nevertheless, I would like to acknowledge the following people for their faith that this thesis could be completed and that what I had to say was meaningful and important.

Since my arrival at the University of Alberta, Department of Political Science, I have had the privilege of working with Dr. Fred Judson. His guidance has been invaluable throughout my studies and was instrumental in realizing the "final days" of the thesis under less than ideal circumstances.

Two amazing scholars rounded-out my supervisory committee: Dr. Janine Brodie and Dr. Catherine Kellogg. Since her arrival at the University of Alberta, Dr. Brodie has been an outstanding role-model and mentor. Dr. Brodie's enduring kindness combined with penetrating insight has improved my thinking and pushed me to be a better political scientist. She has opened many opportunities for me and absolutely personifies what it means to mentor junior scholars. Dr. Catherine Kellogg joined the committee after a shift in my focus and has been instrumental in building my confidence so that I could engage Dunayevskaya's Hegel. From our first meeting she has encouraged me to pursue this research project.

Over the many years of my university education, I have been engaged by a number of scholars; however, I feel particularly fortunate to have had Dr. Roger Epp as one of my first professors and as the internal examiner for my thesis. He helped set me on this path and has always exemplified what it means "to teach".

Finally, I want to acknowledge Dr. Abigail Bakan who has served as the external examiner for the thesis. Not only has it been a pleasure to meet Dr. Bakan and discuss her important research and scholarly contributions in Canadian political science, but also to see in action a commitment to furthering teaching through the doctoral process. I greatly value Dr. Bakan's warmth, integrity, and thorough analysis.

While the scholars listed above have all formally served on my committee, I have always had a "sixth" committee member, Dr. Malinda Smith. I first met Dr. Smith in my Masters program when I was assigned as her Teaching Assistant. I found in Dr. Smith a rare combination of superb intellect and supportive compassion. Over the many intervening years, I have worked with Dr. Smith on a variety of projects and have relied on her "open door" on many occasions. Her confidence in me has helped sustain me throughout the doctoral program.

Over the course of a program of this nature, many family and friends are neglected. Here, I would like to thank them all for their understanding and

particularly acknowledge their forbearance while I was mostly absent and immersed in my own research and studies. However, several family members are deserving of special mention.

First, Mom and Dad, Fred and Gloria Rein, you have always been there for me and encouraged me to fulfill my dreams. My every success is rooted in your love and support.

Second, I have always been supported by my grandparents, Helen and Albert Brauer. They both have always made me proud of "where I come from" and I can only hope that they are equally proud of "where I've ended up."

Also, my in-laws, Pradeep and Shobha Dhir have extended their support and faith that Sandeep and I could succeed at any goal to which we set our minds.

Many friends have offered words and actions of encouragement over the years. A special mention must be made of Troy Geldart who has used "carrots and sticks" over the years to nudge me along to completion.

Since July 2005, I have returned to Augustana campus to teach Political Studies and have found a collegial Faculty that has offered every encouragement. In particular, I want to acknowledge Dr. Jeremy Mouat, Dr. Phil Merklinger, Dr. Paula Marentette and Dr. Roxanne Harde for their gentle insistence that the best thing was "to get it done". And, mention must be made of the years of encouragement from Professor Emeritus, Dr. By Reesor. Further, prior to arriving at Augustana, I enjoyed the supportive encouragement of many members of the Centre for Global and Social Analysis at Athabasca University.

While all arguments and interpretations are my own, I could not have completed the research contained in this project without the assistance of News and Letters. I want to recognize Olga Domanski, Peter Hudis, Jim Obst, Kevin Anderson, Andrew Kliman, Anne Jaclard, Mary-Joan Grey, and the members of News and Letters who have been open in sharing with me their commitment to Marxist Humanism. Their living memory and commitment to the "biography of an idea" has enriched this project and my thinking in significant ways.

Further, I want to acknowledge that the research contained in this project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the University of Alberta Doctoral Fellowship, the Department of Political Science Graduate Assistantships and travel funds, and the Edmonton Counsular Ball.

Two final acknowledgements must be made here. The first is to Dr. Sean McMahon. Over the course of our doctoral studies, Sean and I discovered that success was not the outcome of competition but of collaboration. Thus, we shared office space and "thinking space" and his assistance, support and willingness to debate not only improved the quality of the work I present here but

demonstrated the lasting value of a worthy interlocutor. Moreover, in every way Sean demonstrated what it means to be a friend and comrade, another "body in the trenches" as it were, and the result was that this project was far less of a burden and much more of a joy. For this, I give my lasting gratitude, respect and friendship.

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Chapter One

The Biography of an Idea

> *When we hear the Idea spoken of, we need not imagine something far away beyond this mortal sphere. The Idea is rather what is completely present: and it is found, however confused and degenerated, in every consciousness.*
>
> *From Hegel's Encyclopaedia §213*

In 1986, Raya Dunayevskaya made her final deposit of materials to the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Dunayevskaya argued that the only biography that mattered was the biography of an Idea and it is in her archives that we find preserved the history of her own philosophical development and the recorded emergence of the ideas that coalesced into the philosophy she called Marxist Humanism. Her final personal contribution was " Volume XII: Retrospective and Perspective" and spanned the years 1924 – 1986.[1] In the introduction, Dunayevskaya noted:

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[1] Dunayevskaya's Archives were of great importance to her. She made her first deposit in 1969. Following her death, additional materials have been added under the title *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of World Development*. To give the reader a sense of the span and scope of the Archives, it holds material from 1924 until Dunayevskaya's death in 1987. There are 15 volumes that total more than 17,000 microfilm pages. Although Dunayevskaya personally organized the materials and categories of the documents until her death, she was assisted over the years by members of News and Letters, some of whom were professionally trained archivists, who shared her commitment to maintaining a documentary record of relevant materials. My own research endeavors in the Dunayevskaya Archives have been greatly facilitated by News and Letters, particularly by Olga Domanski, Peter Hudis, and Jim Obst. Their intimate familiarity with the archival documents and their own participation in News and Letters (Domanski was a founding member and long-time secretary to Dunayevskaya) has been indispensable in tracing Dunayevskaya's philosophical development. As much of the research for the Chapters which follow this

> The whole question of the relationship of any ongoing event with the past, with the very concept of Archives, depends on the two opposite words – continuity and discontinuity. Whereas only great divides in epochs, in cognition, in personality, are crucial, and may relate to turning points in history, no discontinuity can really achieve that type of new "epochal" moment unless it has established continuity with the historic course of human development.[2]

In other words, no new Idea can arrive without breaking with past conceptions (and personalities); and yet, in order for the Idea "to hear itself speak" it must also share a history, a relationship with the past. Dunayevskaya's development of a body of Ideas, subsumed under the title of Marxist Humanism, was the product of both continuities and discontinuities that span several decades in its development. While it was certainly the case that Dunayevskaya was a prolific writer, thinker, activist, philosopher, her impact on Marxist philosophy, particularly what we might call academic Marxism, has been minimal. This has been to the detriment of academic Marxism and Marxist philosophy writ large. In an effort to effect the goal of "retrospective – perspective" suggestively raised by the title of Dunayevskaya's last submission to her Archives, I will establish the historical foundations for Marxist Humanism based on a detailed engagement with the first twenty-five years of Dunayevskaya's activism and philosophical studies which focused primarily on Marx, Lenin, and Hegel.

Over the course of the next nine Chapters I will put forward the argument, rooted in Dunayevskaya's own theorizing and philosophical writings, that she is a critical thinker whose works make an important contribution to our understanding of both the

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introduction draw on archival materials referencing has been shortened to simply "Archive #" followed by the relevant microfilm page number.

[2] Raya Dunayevskaya, *Guide to The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of World Development*. News and Letters, p. 59.

historical development of capitalism and its form today. In Marx's philosophy Dunayevskaya grasped the meaning and implications of the Hegelian dialectic expressed through Absolute Negativity. Within her philosophical outlook is the foundation for challenging the inhuman relations of capitalism realizing a new human society, a new beginning. This is the full implication of her work to recover Marx's humanism.

Admittedly, this is an expansive thesis; however, the process of explicating Dunayevskaya's philosophy can be achieved on much more modest grounds. In order to capture Dunayevskaya's contribution, this project examines her writings and activities between 1930 – 1955. I show that this is the formative period of Marxist Humanist philosophy and examine the key moments of discovery and rupture that deepened Dunayevskaya's engagement with Marx and Marxist philosophy more generally. Importantly, the years covered here span the development of state capitalist theory, the identification of non-worker/revolutionary subjectivities (particularly Blacks, women and youth), and the return to Hegel as the source of Marx's dialectic. The reading of Dunayevskaya's work that follows employs an objective/subjective, dialectical approach to her theoretical writings, co-written texts, and personal correspondence. Throughout the Chapters, her work is always situated in relation to objective, world conditions and her subjective experience and cognition of those conditions. In order to proceed to this objective/subjective reading, the introduction provides a brief biographical sketch of Dunayevskaya and enumerates the key concepts and questions that animated her work in the 1930 – 1955 period. It closes with an overview of the key elements of the subsequent Chapters.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910 – 1987)

Although Dunayevskaya was adamant that the only biography of merit was the "biography of an idea", it would be impossible to explore her ideas without also making reference to her life experiences. Chapter Two will provide some biographical information as it related to Dunayevskaya's participation in radical political movements; subsequent Chapters necessarily refer to her organizational activities. However, at the outset it is useful to gain an overall sense of Dunayevskaya and her experiences as they contributed to her philosophical insights – though I would hasten to add, knowing of her distrust of the psychoanalytical turn in some Marxism, that this is not an attempt to construct a psychological profile.

Dunayevskaya was engaged in a life-long project of projecting a comprehensive philosophy of liberation and freedom rooted in Marx's humanism. Our consideration of Dunayevskaya's work toward realizing such a philosophy begins in the 1930s and concludes in April 1955. In the 1930s, Dunayevskaya was active in the American Trotskyist movement. She served as Leon Trotsky's Russian language secretary in Mexico in 1937 – 1938. Yet, in 1939, Dunayevskaya found herself fundamentally disagreeing with Trotsky's analysis of the USSR as a "workers' state, though degenerate". As a result, she broke with Trotsky on the "Russian Question" in 1939 and in the early 1940s became co-leader of a minority Tendency in the Trotskyist Workers Party. The Tendency was first known as the State Capitalist tendency because it interpreted Stalinist Russia as a capitalist state; by 1945 the Tendency was more generally known as the Johnson Forest tendency in recognition of the shared leadership of J.R. Johnson (the pseudonym of C.L.R. James) and Freddie Forest (the pseudonym of

Raya Dunayevskaya). Although not "named" in the Tendency, a second woman, Grace Lee Boggs, was also an important leader within the group and a key philosophical interlocutor for Dunayevskaya. In 1947 the Johnson Forest tendency resigned its membership in the Workers Party and joined the "official" Trotskyist party in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party. The Tendency remained active participants in the Socialist Workers Party until 1951. From 1951 – 1955, the Tendency continued its organizational development in an independent organization known as Correspondence. That organization would subsequently split with more than half of the membership forming a new group under the leadership of Dunayevskaya, known as the News and Letters Committees. It has survived Dunayevskaya's death and continues to publish a regular newspaper and numerous writings under the general rubric of Marxist Humanism.

Over the period of her leadership in Johnson Forest, Dunayevskaya undertook a close study of the Russian economy under Stalin's five year plans; she translated into English for the first time parts of Marx's *Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts of 1844* and Lenin's Notebooks on Hegel; and she continued her earlier work in support of Black civil rights and the recognition of Blacks as a revolutionary force in the United States.[3] Dunayevskaya maintained a strong commitment to engaging those social groups she believed were revolutionary in an on-going conversation and dialogue that attempted to maintain the unity of theory and practice. Her *praxis* in this regard was solidified during the late 1940s and early 1950s by her direct involvement with West Virginia miners, who in the face of deadly automation (the "continuous miner") and worsening working conditions, went on wild cat strikes.[4] For Dunayevskaya, not only were the miners demonstrating a rejection of the separation of "manual from mental" labour, but they were expressing a desire for freedom. Moreover, the strikers also rejected the attempts of the "labour aristocracy" to suppress their demands, making a lie of the claim that the unions were acting "for the workers". Dunayevskaya's practical and theoretical engagement with the miners' strikes significantly differed from the Socialist Workers Party leadership and with her co-leader in the Tendency. By 1953, Dunayevskaya was increasingly convinced that theory needed to be grounded in practice but, and this was the important "double movement" she discerned from Hegel's Absolutes, practice needed also to be grounded in theory. If not unified, the results, as Dunayevskaya analyzed them, were deadly: Stalin's Russia and Mao's China, global war, and the development of nuclear arsenals.

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[3] Dunayevskaya's translations of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* were included as an Appendix to the first edition of *Marxism and Freedom.* See: Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom From 1776 Until Today* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958). Subsequent references to the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* will appear in the text as *1844 Manuscripts.*

After the break-up of Johnson Forest in 1955, the result of a growing philosophical and organizational schism between James and Dunayevskaya, she continued to build the News and Letters Committees and to engage in philosophical work. The humanist elements that Dunayevskaya had begun to identify in Marx's works were more fully explicated in her first book-length work, *Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today*, which was published in 1958 with an introduction by Herbert Marcuse. News and Letters, from April 1955, regularly published a paper (also named *News and Letters*) which was always edited by a rank-and-file worker in order to ensure that the content and orientation of the newspaper would speak to workers as well as other key revolutionary "subjectivities": women, youth, and Blacks were singled out early on; however the paper today includes "queer notes", sections on "prisoner's voices" and a growing focus on "immigrant revolts". Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, Dunayevskaya was committed to the national independence movements that were redefining the African continent while also working with dissidents across Eastern Europe and China. Her on-going philosophical studies produced a second book in 1973 entitled *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao* with an introduction by noted philosopher Louis Dupré. Dunayevskaya's final book was published in 1981, entitled *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. In a way similar to her discovery of the *1844 Manuscripts*, Dunayevskaya not only took up a critique of Luxemburg but also introduced readers to Marx's little known *Ethnological Notebooks* which she argued clearly demonstrated Engels' perversion of Marx.[5] Dunayevskaya wrote that she anticipated the book would engage feminist theorists, but she was greeted instead by silence.[6]

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[4] The continuous miner was a machine that was introduced to coal mining in the early 1950s as a mechanism to automate coal extraction. It was, however, extremely dangerous and often led to the deaths and injuries of miners.

These three books engaged Marxist philosophy from within a humanist reading. After the completion of *Rosa Luxemburg*, Dunayevskaya and News and Letters routinely referred to these works collectively as the "Trilogy of Revolution". They mark the consolidation of Dunayevskaya's philosophical thinking. However, she never stopped thinking and writing and at the end of her life was still committed to the completion of one additional component: a book specifically on dialectics and organization.[7] In fact, the question of "what happens after the revolution", in an organizational sense, was one that Dunayevskaya raised from her earliest involvement in Trotskyism. It drove her desire to form an independent organization that differed from vanguardist notions of "the party to lead". However, this work was only in outline form at the time of her death and News and Letters continues to struggle with how to project Marxist Humanism organizationally, particularly in light of the need and desire to present a meaningful alternative to capitalism.

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[5] Karl Marx, and Lawrence Krader (translator), *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx (Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock)*, Quellen Und Untersuchungen Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen Und Österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung, N.F, 3 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972).

[6] Dunayevskaya, Raya. "A Letter to Adrienne Rich." 18 September 1986. Dunayevskaya wrote to Rich: "From the reception [of Dunayevskaya's works on women's liberation] (or mostly lack of it) of my works by so-called orthodox Marxists, on the one hand, and by radical feminist, on the other hand, I felt that both the radical feminists and the post-Marx Marxists lack a philosophy of revolution needed for total revolution."

Before introducing the key themes to be explored, a word or two needs to be said about Dunayevskaya and her interactions with or acknowledgments by what I have termed "academic Marxism". It is often the case that biographical statements about Dunayevskaya highlight her association with "great men" and the well-known feminist scholar Adrienne Rich. Sometimes these biographical sketches read like an "apologia" for Dunayevskaya's lack of academic credentials; however, I view these interactions somewhat differently. First, as has been already noted, Dunayevskaya did serve as Trotsky's Russian language secretary for a short time in Mexico. Certainly, working with the "Man of October" was a tremendous and formative experience for Dunayevskaya. Second, she was also engaged in a long correspondence with Herbert Marcuse which was initiated prior to the publication of *Marxism and Freedom* and continued until 1978.[8] Marcuse did not share Dunayevskaya's interpretations of Hegel's Absolutes, but he did acknowledge the importance of her work, much like E.H. Carr who also responded favourably to her early work. Dunayevskaya also corresponded with Eric Fromm and he included her essay " Marx's Humanism Today" in his collection of essays *Socialist Humanism*.[9] Dunayevskaya's archives include numerous letters, correspondence, and inquiries from academics world-wide and her essays have appeared in various academic journals.[10] Third, prior to her death, Adrienne Rich and Dunayevskaya had begun to correspond on Dunayevskaya's views of women's liberation and her projection for a new society.[11] It appeared as if Dunayevskaya was "coming into her own" by the mid-1980s and there is every indication that these sporadic intellectual engagements with Dunayevskaya's works are contemporarily becoming less sporadic and more serious in their treatment of Dunayevskaya as a philosopher of merit and note. Significantly, in 2002 Lexington Books published an edited collection of Dunayevskaya's writings on dialectics and has subsequently inaugurated the *Raya Dunayevskaya Series in Marxism and Humanism* under the general editorship of Kevin Anderson, Olga Domanski, and Peter Hudis.[12]

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[7] Archive #10878.

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[8] See: Archive #9889-9975.
[9] See: Archive #9976-10061.
[10] For example: *The American Economic Review*, *The Owl of Minerva*, *The Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, *Praxis*, and *Telos*.
[11] Adrienne Rich, "Living the Revolution," *The Women's Book Review* 3, no. 12 (1986).
[12] Raya Dunayevskaya, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson, *The Power of Negativity Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2002).

Why Study Dunayevskaya's Works?

Dunayevskaya's philosophical works span more than 47 years of activity and engagement with Hegel, Marx and post-Marx thinkers. Moreover, Dunayevskaya's life is itself a model of how one "practices theory" and "theorizes practice" to form a unified whole. The 1930 – 1955 period, in particular, allows us to follow Dunayevskaya through the process of arriving at a philosophical orientation that is much more complete (though in some ways less impenetrable) by the time it is formalized in her "Trilogy of Revolution."

As Lenin aptly noted, the failure of Marxists after Marx to understand the Hegel-Marx relationship and the continuity of Marx's thought from Hegel, led to a misreading of Marx's most critical work, *Capital.* Not insignificantly, Lenin included himself in the midst of those Marxists who "went off the rails." But what is at stake in reasserting the Hegel-Marx relationship? This is where Dunayevskaya's work is most instructive. In her early work, prior to the in-depth study of Lenin and Hegel, Dunayevskaya was able to identify the "nature" of the Soviet Union in part because she had the opportunity to read Marx's *1844 Manuscripts.* In other words, because she was alert to the role of alienation in creating value (what Marx called "estranged labour"), she was attentive to the human element that constituted the central relation of capitalism—what actually imbues the class character of the capitalist mode of production with its humanity/inhumanity. This drew her attention to the worker and anchored her analysis in the relations that attended production in the Soviet Union. Her subsequent readings of *Capital* continued to be informed by Marx's humanist writings of 1844. Marxists who do not grasp this central, social relationship, and the subsequent importance of the self-activity of workers in production, are mired in and focused on "the market" – Lenin (before 1914) can be subject to this critique, as is the case with Luxemburg, or Trotsky for that matter. The structural turn in Marxism and the "New Left" also arguably repeat this fundamental error.

A humanist reading of Marx, that is the very reading that Dunayevskaya undertakes in the period considered here, opens up the possibility of returning to a fundamental interrogation of the relations that typify capitalistic production. Such an approach raises many new and mostly uninvestigated questions about the current phase of capitalism as well as having implications for where and how Marx's notion of the "revolution in permanence" can be achieved.

Chapter Overviews

Each Chapter follows Dunayevskaya's development of concepts and ideas chronologically, focusing on specific themes and events that influenced her theoretical and philosophical thinking at that particular moment. Below is a brief overview of each Chapter, highlighting those key insights which furthered Dunayevskaya's intellectual development and that demonstrate her importance as a critical Marxist.

Chapter Two familiarizes the reader with Dunayevskaya's early organization experiences in the Communist and Trotskyist movements in the United States. The reader is also provided with a background to the development of Trotskyism in the United States more generally. These historical components are necessary to make sense of the series of "breaks, departures, and resignations" that attended Dunayevskaya's participation in the "organized Left" over the 1940s and 1950s. Although Dunayevskaya worked with Trotsky in Mexico and continued to work on his behalf upon her return to the United States in 1938, she found that she was unable to support Trotsky's defense of Russia. The break with Trotsky in 1939 marked the emergence of Dunayevskaya as an independent thinker. By 1941 she had joined the Trotskyist minority party, the Workers Party, and had independently arrived at a state capitalist position on the "Russian Question". This position was shared by CLR James and together they formed a state capitalist tendency in the Workers Party. Philosophically, this period also marked Dunayevskaya's first study of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*.

Chapters Three and Four focus on the development of state capitalist theory and the Tendency's engagement with contending interpretations of Stalin's Russia. Within the Workers Party, this involved a debate with bureaucratic collectivists, a position held by the majority in the Workers Party. Outside of the Workers Party, the *American Economic Review* published Dunayevskaya's translation of a revision to the Soviet practice of teaching *Capital*. It attracted the responses of important Marxist economists at the time and was reported in the *New York Times*.[13] Both Chapters demonstrate the breadth of Dunayevskaya's empirical studies of the Russian economy, with particular emphasis on Stalin's five year plans; and they show her ability to link the apparent transformation of the Russian revolution into "its opposite" to Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production. What was beginning to emerge from these engagements inside and outside of the Workers Party was Dunayevskaya's recognition that the law of value, the key to Marx's analysis, was not an "economic category" *per se* but was the very class antagonism that defined the mode of production. Where value dominates, regardless of the legal status of property, the mode of production, she concluded, was capitalistic.

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[13] Will Lissner. "Soviet Economics Stirs Debate Here." *New York Times*, 1 October 1944, p. 30.

Chapter Five departs from the "Russian Question" proper to examine Dunayevskaya's work with and theorizing about the "Negro Question". From her youth, Dunayevskaya had been actively involved in Black civil rights movements, organizations, and newspapers. Similarly, within the Trotskyist movement, she was a strong advocate for a political line that recognized Blacks as active, revolutionary subjects in their own right and not subject to the authority of white-dominated trade unions or vanguardist parties. Dunayevskaya turned to Lenin and Trotsky on the "National Question" to argue in favour of supporting autonomous Black organizations while also recognizing that Black workers faced a "double oppression". Dunayevskaya's writings in this period, the mid-1940s, engaged the history of Black organizing in the United States and drew out lessons which were not only applied to the role of Blacks in realizing "the revolution", but were also foundational for the recognition of other potentially revolutionary subjectivities, namely women and youth. These particular "subjectivities", combined with workers, became the organizational focal point for the Johnson Forest tendency.

Given the minority status of the Tendency within the Workers Party and their rejection of the political line on all major "questions", it is not surprising to find that by 1947 the Tendency was in favour of a reunification between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party, the two Trotskyist parties in the United States. Nor is it surprising to find that the Tendency moved its membership to the Socialist Workers Party when the unity talks failed, given the significant philosophical differences between the

Tendency and the Workers Party leadership. Chapter Six details the Tendency's philosophical differences with the Workers Party; however, rather than simply being a narrative of a political dispute, the Chapter demonstrates the growing philosophical development of Dunayevskaya particularly and the Tendency generally. By 1947, state capitalist theory was consolidating into a comprehensive approach that did not simply answer the "Russian Question" but offered a global analysis of world capitalism, located firmly in Marx's *Capital*. Planning was no longer located as a feature of Stalin's capitalism but was viewed as a feature of capitalism writ large. Finally, the Tendency was able to enunciate the centrality of dialectics as a method for answering the questions facing the United States and International Trotskyism.

Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine cover an intensive period of theoretical study and philosophical development for Dunayevskaya. After 1947, the Tendency entered the Socialist Workers Party and remained there until 1951. In this same period, Johnson Forest focused its efforts on developing a deeply philosophical engagement with Marx's writings. Between 1947 – 1951, Dunayevskaya translated Lenin's "Philosophical Notebooks", undertook a dialectical reading of Lenin, and, then, re-engaged with *Capital* based on Lenin's readings of Hegel. In this same period, James completed his own "Notes on Dialectics" and the Tendency produced one of its most comprehensive documents, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*.[14] The communication between the Tendency leadership covered in these Chapters was primarily through written correspondence among James, Dunayevskaya and Boggs. While these letters preserve the richness of "in the moment" discovery, they present their own complications in terms of correctly assessing meaning and tone. Each Chapter is careful to ground analysis and subsequent conclusions in the text that was written rather than attempting a broader interpolation of the participants. What emerges as most significant from these letters, or "philosophical correspondence", is the application of the Hegelian dialectic to Marx's and Lenin's works. Dunayevskaya's letters of this period carefully trace moments of transition in Lenin's and Marx's work in order to draw out their particular insights into the defining features of capitalism as a mode of production, but also in terms of realizing fundamental social change – what Dunayevskaya would increasingly refer to as the "new society"..

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[14] Archive #1333-1412 and C. L. R. James. "Notes on Dialectics: Part II, the Hegelian Logic." Web page, 1948 [accessed 10 July 2005]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/dialecti/index.htm.

This philosophical correspondence set the foundation for what Dunayevskaya termed as her "breakthrough" on Hegel's Absolutes in May 1953. Chapter 10, therefore, begins in 1951 and traces the Tendency's decision to leave the Socialist Workers Party, notes the growing tension between the Tendency leadership, and records the Tendency's formation of a new organization, *Correspondence,* in 1953. Conceptually, the Chapter also engages Dunayevskaya's philosophical moment by carefully reviewing the two letters she self-identified as containing her realization of Hegel's full meaning for Marx's humanism. The letters were written on May 12 and 20, 1953 and for the first time concisely name the source and method of historical movement in Hegel's and Marx's thought – absolute negativity – the essence of which is the drive of subjects to realize freedom. Dunayevskaya emerges from the 1953 period with a much clearer sense of what Hegel means for Marx and what Marx meant for the contemporary period of capitalism in which she lived. It is apparent that the formation of News and Letters in

1955 was a bold attempt to realize the unity of theory and practice implied in the "Hegel letters" of 1953.

These various and sometimes seemingly disparate lines of objective world conditions, philosophical discovery and subjective experience are drawn together in the final Chapter. Chapter Eleven summarizes the major discoveries of Dunayevskaya's "moments" between 1930 – 1955 while indicating where her analysis may take us in our assessments of and engagements with capitalism today.

Chapter Two

The 1930s and the Philosophical Break with Trotsky

Introduction

This chapter traces Dunayevskaya's earliest philosophical development within the U.S. Trotskyist movement, spanning her initial engagement with the Communist Party to the emergence of the Workers Party under the leadership of Max Shachtman. Dunayevskaya's involvement in and engagement with the emergence of Trotskyism in the 1930s is examined here in order to discern the foundations for her philosophical break with Trotsky in 1939 and her subsequent participation in the Workers Party in collaboration with CLR James and later Grace Lee Boggs.[1] Importantly, in this period we encounter the development of a unique theorization of the Russia Question, termed "state capitalism", which challenged both empirically and theoretically the notion that the Soviet Union constituted a fundamental break with capitalism.[2] Elaborating Dunayevskaya's political and philosophical development through this crucial period of theoretical and organizational "breakthroughs" is necessary in order to grasp the analytical significance of her later contributions to Marxist thought. It is through a critical engagement with these texts (and those covered in subsequent chapters) that we can chart the emergence of Dunayevskaya as an independent and significant contributor to Marxist philosophy writ large. We begin then, in the 1930s.

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[1] Boggs is Grace Lee's married name. Although she is referred to as Lee in the correspondence and documents analyzed throughout the Chapters (she was not married until 1953) for the sake of clarity I have consistently referred to her as Boggs throughout all Chapters.

[2] The reader will often sense a reluctance in Dunayevskaya's writings to use the terms "Soviet" or "Soviet Union". Most often she used the terms "Russian" or "Russia". This was in-keeping with her analysis of the mode of production that dominated Russia (and those states in its sphere of influence) under Stalin's regime. Stalinism, according to Dunayevskaya bore no resemblance to the workers movements that first spontaneously established Soviets during the 1905 failed revolution and again in the course of the 1917 revolution. For the most part

Dunayevskaya's earliest political and philosophical engagements occurred within the context of a divided American Left. In this chapter, selections from Dunayevskaya's 1930s and early 1940s writings will be reviewed within the context of leftist sectarianism and her own deepening exposure to Marx's philosophical writings. The chapter develops chronologically, first with a brief historical overview of the development of key Trotskyist movements within the United States, culminating in Dunayevskaya's participation in the Workers Party (formed 1940).[3] Just prior Dunayevskaya broke with Trotsky on the Russian Question and began to develop her own analytical framework, generally termed state capitalism. The chapter then examines Dunayevskaya's participation within the State Capitalist tendency, notably in collaboration with CLR James. The chapter closes with a review of an essay by Dunayevskaya, entitled "Is Russia

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I have attempted to maintain the same distinction throughout the various Chapters unless I found that clarity was adversely affected.

[3] The focus of the Chapter is specific to American Trotskyism in an attempt to avoid creating an overly confusing historical account. Many of the party names referenced in the chapter were used by different groups at different historical moments and some continue to be used by organizations today. Every attempt has been made to identify specific dates in an endeavor to keep the history accessible to the reader.

Part of the Collectivist Epoch of Society?" (1942), which further developed the state capitalist thesis. Dunayevskaya refined the state capitalist approach through empirical studies of the Soviet Five Year Plans. These studies were published by the *New International* in two parts. The empirical information and resulting arguments will be taken up in Chapter Three, though, the studies were initiated and written contemporaneously with the articles discussed here.

Contextualizing Dunayevskaya

Having immigrated to the United States from Ukraine in 1922, Raya Dunayevskaya joined the Communist Party between the age of 12 and 13 years. By 1924, under the pseudonym "Sunny," Dunayevskaya had contributed her first article to the Youth Journal of the Communist Party.[4] As relations between Party members deteriorated in Moscow, particularly between Stalin and Trotsky, the Communist Party in the United States also began to divide along sectarian lines. In 1928, Dunayevskaya was expelled from the Communist Party for demonstrating "Trotskyist" sympathies.[5] From 1928 to 1937, Dunayevskaya traveled across the United States, working with a variety of organizations, such as the Spartacus Youth League and the Washington Committee to Aid Agricultural Workers.[6]

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[4] Terry Moon, "Raya Dunayevskaya" in Rima Lunin Schultz, and Adele Hast, editors, " *Women Building Chicago 1790-1990: A Biographical Dictionary* (Chicago: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 239. See Archive #8470.

[5] Moon, p. 239.

[6] Moon, p. 239.

The 1928 – 1937 period was one of turmoil for the American Left. The Communist Party had formed in 1919 from an earlier faction of the Socialist Party.[7] By 1928, the American Communist Party was also being torn apart by the political battles in Moscow and all Trotsky sympathizers were expelled from the Party at this time. James Cannon, subsequently one of the longest-serving leaders of Trotskyism in America, recalled the heady days following the expulsion: "We were sure of what we were fighting about. All the little organizational machinations, that had loomed up so big in the squabbles, were just thrown off like an old coat. We began the real movement of Bolshevism in this country, the regeneration of American Communism."[8] After a cross-country speaking tour by Cannon and organizational meetings, the first national conference of American Trotskyists was held in Chicago, May 1929. The emerging organization took the name "The Communist League of America, Left Opposition of the Communist Party."[9] At the time the Trotskyists were forming the Communist League,

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[7] James Patrick Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism; Report of a Participant* (New York: Pioneer publishers, 1944), p. 8. Actually, two parties initially formed: the Communist Party of the United States and the Communist Labour Party; however, by 1920 a United Communist Party emerged (see Cannon, pp. 12 – 13). Notably, the earlier Communist Party operated underground until organizers formally sought the legalization of the Party in 1922 (Cannon, pp. 17 – 18).

[8] Cannon, p. 55.

[9] Cannon, p. 79. As Cannon records: "Let me repeat. There were 31 delegates and 17 alternates from 12 cities, representing approximately 100 members in our national organization. ... We were sure we were right. We were sure our program was correct. We went from that conference with the confident assurance that the whole future development of the regenerated Communist movement in America, up to the time the proletariat takes power and begins organizing the socialist society, would trace its origin to that first National Conference of the American Trotskyists... ."

Dunayevskaya moved to Boston and joined a group of independent Trotskyist women under the leadership of Antoinette Bucholz, a medical doctor and an active birth control advocate.[10] No longer a "sympathizer," Dunayevskaya became active in both the campaigns for legalized birth control in the United States and the wider Trotskyist movement.

According to Cannon's history of American Trotskyism, after Trotsky's initial exile from Russia in 1929, the American movement maintained close contact with Trotsky, ensuring his "presence" was always apparent to American Trostkyists.[11] In 1937, Dunayevskaya discovered an opportunity to work directly with Trotsky. Trotsky, now exiled in Mexico, requested a Russian language secretary be selected from among the American Trotskyists to work with his staff in Mexico. Not one for inaction, Dunayevskaya wrote to Trotsky and, upon receiving an invitation to serve as his Russian language secretary, left for Mexico (notably without the permission of the League).[12] Dunayevskaya's time with Trotsky was relatively short as a result of the unexpected deaths of her brother and father, forcing her return to the United States in 1938. After she returned to the US, Dunayevskaya continued regular correspondence with Trotsky and devoted much of her energies to organizing within the Trotskyist movement in the

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[10] Moon, p. 239. See: Pierre Frank. "The Fourth International: The Long March of the Trotskyists." Web page, [accessed 7 April 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/frank/works/march/ch10.htm.

[11] Cannon, p. 75. Frank notes Bucholz' biography and contribution to the Fourth International.

[12] Moon, p. 239. Remarkably, Dunayevskaya was not fluent in Russian and had only initiated a personal study of the language in 1936.

United States. Moreover, it is apparent from her 1938 article entitled "The Man Trotsky" that Dunayevskaya held Trotsky in the highest personal esteem.[13]

Organizationally, Trotskyism in America underwent a number of different party forms. In 1934, the American Trotskyists had begun a process of further unification by merging with the American Workers Party under the banner of the Workers Party. In 1936, the Workers Party, under the leadership of Cannon and Shachtman, decided to formally join the recently reinvigorated Socialist Party.[14] The Socialist Party set terms for this "merger" that included the stipulation that each member of the Workers Party had to individually seek membership in the

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[13] While not always theoretically significant, the correspondence between Trotsky and Dunayevskaya indicates that they enjoyed a congenial and warm relationship. In a 1938 article entitled "The Man Trotsky," Dunayevskaya documents what life was like with the Trotskys. At the close of the article she recounts the following passage, beginning with a note she received from Trotsky after the deaths of her brother and father: " 'Dear Rae, we wish you strength and courage in face of it all. Natalia and I express our warmest, our most sincere sympathy to all members of your family, and, you, dear Rae, we firmly embrace. Your, L.D.'

Even my mother who is a religious woman to whom Trotsky is merely an 'infidel' could not but be moved by the warm note. 'How' she asked, 'can a great man like that be so simple?' 'It is his simplicity which makes him great,' I answered. And yet it is a trait the world has overlooked in Trotsky. I, too, had been wary of his 'egotism', his 'coldness'. Though his greatness had inspired me with a desire to work for him, I feared his 'dictatorial' methods. But his simplicity had quickly dissipated that wrong impression. ... He never regarded us [his secretariat] as people who worked 'for' him. He considered us members of his family who assisted him in his literary creations.

I know the simple, personal traits in Trotsky. They do not detract from his greatness but make him, oh, so human.

It is his simplicity, the devotion to one cause throughout his life, his fervent belief that the revolution which began in Russia is but a link in the 'permanent revolution,' the world socialist revolution, that makes of him not a lone exile but a power" (Archive #2304).

[14] Cannon, p. 231.

Socialist Party.[15] Cannon argued that these onerous conditions of membership were worth enduring to further the political cause of Trotskyism.[16] However, the relationship with the Socialist Party was both rocky and short-lived. The Trotskyists were expelled from the organization in 1937, Cannon and Shachtman formed the Socialist Workers Party, following the expulsion from the Socialist Party. The persistence of the Russian Question and the emergence of conditions for a second World War split these key leaders of American Trotskyism, first ideologically and then organizationally.[17] By 1939 the alliance between Shachtman and Cannon, so decisive in first uniting the Trotskyist movement, was broken.[18] The Shachtman-Cannon split led to the formation of a new Workers Party under Shachtman's leadership in 1940. The Workers Party itself represented a break with Trotsky on the nature of the Soviet Union; however, as Peter Drucker argues, Shachtman was also attempting to create an open, Marxist party:

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[15] Cannon, p. 231.
[16] Cannon, p. 232.
[17] Although the "Russian Question" was a term used by Lenin, among others, leading up to and following the Revolution, it came to take on a special meaning within American Trotskyism, brought into bold relief by the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact. At its essence the Russian Question focused on determining the nature of the Russian state given Stalinism. Further, it is worth noting that the "posing of the Question" was common place among the Left, as Julius Jacobson rather humorously recounts: "And there was more, considerably more, to absorb the 30s' activist, above all in the intensely ideational revolutionary Left of my experience where local branch meetings, citywide conferences and national conventions were often turned into ideological battlegrounds in what appeared to be the Permanent War of the Questions, as opposing factions fought over the Trade Union Question, the American Question, the Negro Question, the Woman Question and the Jewish Question, the National Question and the International Question and always, of course, the Organizational Question and ... the list is almost inexhaustible. The debates were never polite exchanges. If polemical thrusts had lethal force, most in the revolutionary movement I knew would have perished prematurely, eliminating the cadre who cranked the handles of antiquated mimeograph machines spitting out pages (not always legible) to be manually collated and stapled into volumes of discussion articles, Majority and Minority Reports, Theses and Resolutions; nor would there have been an audience." From: Julius Jacobson, "The Soviet Union Is Dead: The "Russian Question" Remains," *New Politics* 5, no. 2 (1995): hypertext at http://www.wpunj.edu/~newpol/issue18/jacobs18.htm [accessed 18 September 2005].

> Shachtman wanted to add innovations to this body of thought [Marxism], beginning with a new look at the Soviet Union. He could not accept Cannon's emphasis on preserving unchanged the substance of what Marx, Lenin and Trotsky had handed down.
>
> In April 1940 Shachtman left the Socialist Workers Party and founded his own Workers Party on the basis of his own conceptions.[19]

It would be somewhat misleading to suggest that only the Russian Question was at play in the divisions among Trotskyists in the United States (and elsewhere, for that matter). Of course, personalities mattered, ideological interpretations mattered, and, perhaps most importantly, organizational questions dominated. More relevant, however, to our consideration of Dunayevskaya's work is that 1939 also marked her own break with Trotsky and the beginning of her real, independent philosophical work.

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[18] Bernard K Johnpoll, and Harvey Klehr, *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 356.
[19] Peter Drucker, *Max Shachtman and His Left : a Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century"*, Revolutionary Studies (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1994), p. 109.

1939: Finding Her (Own) Voice

The preceding brief overview of the development of American Trotskyism establishes the political environment for Raya Dunayevskaya's philosophical emergence. It is not sufficient merely to suggest that there was great political ferment among the US Left. This is obvious to anyone who has examined the divisive sectarianism of Left politics around the world. What stands out here, though, is the process of political education and opportunity open to Dunayevskaya by virtue of her participation in the Trotskyist challenge to the Stalinization of the American Communist Party and the subsequent challenges to Trotskyism represented by the Russian Question.[20] Dunayevskaya formally broke with Trotsky in 1939 at the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact specifically over Trotsky's claim that the USSR was a "workers state, though degenerate."[21] For Dunayevskaya, the psychological shock of finding herself in such a profound disagreement with Trotsky caused her to lose her power of speech for two days.[22] The break marked the real beginning of Dunayevskaya's own development: "The realization of Trotsky's error, a mistake that limited the total revolutionary change that Dunayevskaya envisioned, forced her to immerse herself in economics, revolutionary theory, and philosophy, a development that transformed what Marxism would come to mean for her."[23]

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[20] As mentioned earlier, this was one of the divisive debates in the movement. Further, Dunayevskaya was personally very interested in what was generally subsumed under the heading the "Negro Question". This will be examined in detail in Chapter Five in the context of Dunayevskaya's work on revolutionary subjectivity.

[21] The Hitler-Stalin Pact, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, was a non-agression agreement signed between the Soviet Union and Germany on August 23, 1939. For Dunayevskaya this was an act of betrayal of the Revolution and a signal to engage in a new study of the Soviet economy. Trotsky continued to argue that the Soviet Union was a workers' state; however, Natalia Trotsky would later claim that Trotsky would also have come to a different assessment had he not been assassinated August 20, 1940. For a discussion of Trotsky's line vs. the state capitalist position developed by Dunayevskaya see the Natalia Trotsky-Dunayevskaya correspondence, Archive #699-744.

[22] Moon, p. 239.

Turning her attention to the then little known *1844 Manuscripts* and *Capital*, Dunayevskaya sought to understand the true nature of the Soviet Union by unraveling the complex relationship between labour, statified property, planning, and capitalism. At the same time, Dunayevskaya also broke with Cannon and became active in the Workers Party that had formed under the leadership of Max Shachtman in 1940.[24] As a result of her in-depth study of Marx's writings,[25] Dunayevskaya (under the pseudonym Freddie James) presented her first essay to the Workers Party on February 20, 1941.[26] Entitled "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a Capitalist Society," Dunayevskaya argued that the USSR was not a workers' state, but, in fact, the embodiment of capitalism. The essay clearly challenged the nearly blind support often given the Soviets by the Left, but also challenged Shachtman's notion that the USSR was best understood as a form of "bureaucratic collectivism." This first mimeographed essay clearly stakes out the terrain of what would later inform the State Capitalist tendency's approach. A more in-depth examination of her theory of state capitalism as it was initiated is warranted here as it leads to the collaboration of CLR James and Dunayevskaya, and, would later form a corner-stone for the philosophical orientation of Marxist Humanism.

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[23] Moon, p. 239.

[24] Cannon continued to agree with Trotsky's assessment of the Soviet State; however, he also strongly opposed Stalin's politics. The divergence among the Trotskyists at this time focused on the support (political and organizational) that should be given to the Soviet state and how one would theoretically understand the nature of the USSR. For Cannon, as for Trotsky, the USSR represented the undoing of the gains of October, but still in some form held the opportunity for workers to reclaim the revolution. As we will see further along, Shachtman, Dunayevskaya, James, Carter and others offered very different interpretations of what the Soviet state had become and what that "becoming" would mean for Marxist organizations around the world.

[25] The attentive reader will be surprised that the claim is made that Dunayevskaya undertook a detailed study of the *Economic and Philosophic Notebooks* in addition to *Capital* in 1940. Personal correspondence with national co-organizer for News and Letters, Peter Hudis notes: "Raya found Marx's 1844 manuscripts in 1940, in the course of doing research on the Russian economy on the Soviet economy, in the Slavic Division of the New York Public Library. She didn't know at the time that they were the 1844 manuscripts, since she read not the German edition as issued in 1933, but the Russian, as published by Ryzanov, who listed them as "Preparatory Material for Marx's Holy Family." We actually have found the original translations made by her (this is material that hasn't yet been donated to her Archives)." Email correspondence, April 11, 2006. Dunayevskaya

In the first instance, Dunayevskaya's essay provided a foundation, on theoretical and philosophical grounds, for her break with Trotsky. As she noted, "It was the contention of Comrade Trotsky that the existence of statified property in Russia was sufficient to characterize it as a workers' state, regardless of the political regime in power."[27] In essence, this was the position of those

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provides her own recount of these documents in a letter written in 1964, see Archive #13883.

[26] Dunayevskaya would subsequently change her pen name to Freddie Forest, as CLR James was already known as JR Johnson.

[27] Freddie James (Raya Dunayevskaya), "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a Capitalist Society", mimeographed by the Workers' Party for an internal discussion bulletin, March 1941. Note, the article is recorded with the title "Russia is a State Capitalist Society" in the archive index; however, the actual document was missing when Dunayevskaya made her donation to the Wayne State Labour Archives and was only subsequently issued by the News and Letters Committee posthumously, in Raya Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism* (Chicago : News and Letters Pub., 1992).

organizations that continued support for either Trotsky or the Communist Party, Dunayevskaya further argued:

> But I deny that the social conquests of October [1917] – the *conscious* and *active* political and practical participation of the masses in liberating themselves from the yoke of Tsarism, capitalism and landlordism—are to be narrowly translated into mere statified property, that is to say, the ownership of the means of production by a state which in no way resembles the Marxian concept of a workers' state, i.e., 'the proletariat organized as the ruling class.'[28]

Dunayevskaya extended her analysis by arguing: "The determining factor in analyzing the class nature of a society is not whether the means of production are the *private property* of the capitalist class or are state-owned, but whether the means of production are *capital*, that is, whether they are alienated from the direct producers."[29]

In the second instance, Dunayevskaya announced a significantly different interpretation of the Russian Revolution and the nature of the state's relationship to the workers. She challenged her American comrades to apply Marx, not simply to accept on faith the notion that Russia was a workers' state – or Trotsky's modifier "though degenerate". Dunayevskaya's insight goes to the heart of Marx's own analysis of capitalism, which is the alienation of the producer. For Dunayevskaya this led to an inevitable (and radical) conclusion: "But it is necessary among Marxists to stress the fact that socialization of the means of production is not socialism but as much an economic law of capitalist development as is monopoly."[30] In other words, Marx's analysis of capitalist society held true for the USSR as elsewhere and the notion of "bureaucratic collectivism" (which will be taken up in more detail in the next Chapter) did nothing more than obscure Marx's insight regarding alienation of labour. It is important to further note, as Hudis does in his commentary on state capitalism, that Dunayevskaya was always cognizant that state capitalism was fundamental to global capitalism and the operation of a world market. She was not simply attempting to expound the nature of the Soviet economy in order to provide an answer to the Russian Question, but was following Marx's insights into the many phases of capitalist development. In later works, she honed this analysis to focus on the question of state planning and its relationship to the mode of production. In short, the conclusion was that planning is practiced by all capitalist states, not just Russia. In this sense, Dunayevskaya's analysis extended to the Marshall Plan and the New Deal as much as to the Soviet five-year plans, her state capitalist position was a global assessment of capitalist relations.[31]

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[28] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism,* italics in original.
[29] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism,* italics in original.

Johnson Forest Tendency

As a result of her essay, Dunayevskaya was introduced to another comrade who had independently come to a state capitalist position with regard to the USSR – CLR James. CLR James was already a well-known activist among American Trotskyists. Born in Trinidad, James was also an internationally recognized playwright and social theorist by the 1940s, with much of his work focused on Black movements as revolutionary movements. Writing under the pseudonym "JR Johnson," CLR James and Dunayevskaya (as Freddie Forest) formed a minority tendency within the Workers Party. First named the State Capitalist tendency, and by 1945 known as the Johnson Forest tendency, James and Dunayevskaya advocated state capitalism as the key analytical approach to understanding the nature of the Soviet state. The collaboration between James and Dunayevskaya also included Grace Lee Boggs (known as Ria Stone within the Party). This trio provided the intellectual, political, and philosophical leadership within the tendency.[32]

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[30] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism.*
[31] Peter Hudis, "Introduction" in Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. xii.

In order to concretize her initial argument that the USSR was the embodiment of state capitalism, Dunayevskaya undertook a detailed and in-depth study of the Soviet economy. Between 1941 – 1943, Dunayevskaya studied original Russian documents that related to the implementation of Stalin's five year plans. Her early writings allow us the opportunity to see Dunayevskaya actively working out a new philosophy, rooted in Marxism, even though the "moment" of philosophical breakthrough, as she identified it, was not until 1953. Nonetheless, these works provide a historical foundation for contextualizing Dunayevskaya's work and provide significant direction as to how we may employ Marx's insights and theory to elucidate our current era. Moreover, just as the 1941 essay solidified Dunayevskaya's separation from Trotsky, these subsequent documents demonstrated her on-going differentiation from Shachtman and the Workers Party, from orthodox Marxism, and subsequently from the academic Left in the United States. To better understand these foundations, it is necessary to work through the articulation of the state capitalist position as the debate was engaged both within the Workers Party and among other intellectual representatives of the American Left.

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[32] Although the question of leadership would later dog the collaboration between Johnson and Forest, it is quite clear from CLR James' letter to Constance Webb that he viewed Dunayevskaya and Boggs as his students rather than his equals: "You know I have three special 'pupils'. There is Bill Williams [Eric Williams]. He is a PhD of Oxford. He has already written and published some brilliant work and this fall will appear a *superb* book on Capitalism and Slavery. Grace Lee [Boggs] is another. She is also a PhD Columbia in Philosophy [actually, Grace Lee Boggs received her PhD from Bryn Mawr College in 1940]. She is Chinese and I hope within a few months that she will have ready a book on Dialectical Materialism. That question we are going to settle once and for all. The third is Rae. Her special field is Political Economy. As soon as time permits she is going to settle down to a definitive work on the American economy. When you see Bill's book you will understand the quality of work being done. If you have time I can show you essays by all of them. First class work and they are all just beginning" (C. L. R James, Constance Webb, and Anna Grimshaw, *Special Delivery: the Letters of C.L.R. James to Constance Webb, 1939-1948* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), p. 163).

The Essentials of the State Capitalist Position

By way of beginning this section, a disclaimer is first required. It is not my assertion that Dunayevskaya was the only intellectual (or even the first) to articulate a state capitalist critique of the Soviet Union. In fact, it is interesting to note that a version of the "state capitalist" position was being argued earlier by some bourgeois economists, albeit, their goal was not to prove the "revolution betrayed" so much as to assert the overall necessity of capitalism for industrial development and the accumulation of wealth. For example, in 1926, the Foreign Policy Association funded Savel Simard's *State Capitalism in Russia: The Soviet*

Economic System in Operation 1917 – 1926.[33] Moreover, although obviously not critique, Lenin introduced his "new economic program" as a form of "state capitalism."[34] In other words, the notion that the USSR was something different from a socialist society and perhaps more closely resembled capitalist society than many would desire, was an idea that was voiced from a variety of political vantage points shortly after the October victory.[35] In fact, one could conclude that the very persistence of the Russian Question stands as testament to an underlying unease among the various left organizations in the US and elsewhere as to the true nature of the Soviet state.

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[33] Savel Zimand, *State Capitalism in Russia; the Soviet Economic System in Operation, 1917-1926* (New York city: Research department of the Foreign policy association, 1926). In outlining why they decided to fund this study, Foreign Policy Association Chairman James MacDonald noted: "The most remarkable feature of present-day Russia is that men who, a few years ago, were busy destroying the capitalist system are at present using capitalistic methods to reconstruct and develop agriculture, the industry and trade of that country. In these efforts, the Soviet authorities, frequently scrapping their communistic theories when these have clashed too harshly with economic realities, have made vast concessions to capitalist standards" (p. 3).

[34] Many documents concerning Lenin's New Economic Policy use the words "state capitalism". In a 1922 document he defined it as: "The state capitalism, which is one of the principal aspects of the New Economic Policy, is, under Soviet power, a form of capitalism that is deliberately permitted and restricted by the working class. Our state capitalism differs essentially from the state capitalism in countries that have bourgeois governments in that the state with us is represented not by the bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat, who has succeeded in winning the full confidence of the peasantry." Found in, "To the Russian Colony in North America", 1922, Vladimir Il ich Lenin, *V. I. Lenin, Collected Works,* Volume 42 (Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1961), pp. 425c-427. After Lenin's death in 1924, the New Economic Policy was rolled back in favour of Stalin's five-year plan for rapid industrialization.

[35] One of the better known texts on state capitalism was originally penned in 1947 by the well-known British Trotskyist Tony Cliff. SeeTony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* (London: Pluto Press, 1974). However, Cliff's approach differed also from Dunayevskaya and the State Capitalist tendency in that he focused only on the hierarchy of production in the presence of a planned economy. For a brief overview see: Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism,* p. xii. The Frankfurt School's Frederick Pollock also penned an influential essay on state capitalism. See: Frederick Pollock, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations" in Stephen Eric Bronner, and Douglas Kellner, eds, *Critical Theory and Society: a Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

Having offered the above disclaimer, however, it is important to stress that Dunayevskaya's analysis is unique, not because she made the claim first, but because implicit in her examination of the Soviet state formation is an underlying sense of Marx's humanism. Not only, then, are we reading an analysis of the Soviet economy in her writings from this period, but we are witness to the recovery of Marx's humanism – both as philosophy and method. Her critique necessarily focused on Marx's notion of alienation, but did so in a way that explicitly used Marx's own analysis as developed in *Capital* while combining it with his earliest humanist writings. This combining of the so-called "philosophical" Marx with the "economic" Marx is particularly evident in the introduction written for her study of the Russian economy entitled "Labour and Society" to which we will return in a moment. Finally, Dunayevskaya located state capitalism as a "stage" in the over-all development of capitalist society – an argument that appears particularly far-sighted in the post-1989 order.

Building on her work from 1941, and now in discussion and collaboration with CLR James and others supportive of state capitalist analysis, Dunayevskaya continued to strengthen her empirical and theoretical understanding of the Soviet economy. Under the general title "The Nature of the Russian Economy," Dunayevskaya began to develop the Johnson Forest tendency's position on the

Russian Question. The study was originally published by the Workers Party in the *New International.*[36]

"The Nature of the Russian Economy" encompassed an economic study that was published in two parts. Part I was published in December 1942 and January 1943 and Part II was subsequently published (with alterations from the original) in 1946 and 1947, both appearing in the *New International.* Dunayevskaya's study was an in-depth examination of Stalin's five year plans and the economic statistics released by the Soviets. Rather than simply presenting a dry exegesis of Russian economic statistics, Dunayevskaya located her analysis very firmly in Marx's concept of alienated labour, particularly as it was transformed by and, at the same time, transforms society. Significantly, Dunayevskaya's philosophical consideration of the role of labour also drew on Marx's little-known *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* As a consequence of her combined study of the *Manuscripts* and *Capital*, she wrote an introductory essay entitled "Labour and Society," though it is interesting to note that *The New International* did not publish it.[37] In "Labour and Society"

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[36] While the *New International* published several of Dunayevskaya's essays, they were often edited or abbreviated from her original work. Some of the essays were subsequently published posthumously in 1992 in the collection entitled *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*; however, complete texts are available in archival documents and this section draws on both sources.

[37] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 17, states that the *New International* "refused" to publish the introduction. The choice in wording is obviously deliberate and highlights the tensions that were already building between the so-called Majority Shachtmanites and the Johnson Forest tendency. Without evidence to the contrary, one is led to conclude that access to the Russian data was seen as important while the more "ideological" elements of the debate were to be silenced. The Johnson Forest tendency did subsequently

Dunayevskaya argued two key points: (1) labour in class society necessarily differs from labour in socialist society; and (2) the concept of private property is tied directly to property relations and cannot be separated from this relationship simply by the creation/assertion of statified property.

On the question of the nature of labour, Dunayevskaya asserted a typical materialist position, noting that "The driving forces of history have not been great men, but great masses of people who were set into motion by the incongruity between productive forces and production relations, that is to say, by the antagonism between the development of the material means of production and the relations of people in production."[38] Under capitalist society, the arising social division of labour destroys the notion of self-activity and replaces it with alienated labour. The capitalist mode of production, then, is defined by a form of labour that divides mental and manual labour; labour "...has become a drudgery man must perform to earn a living, and not a mode of activity in which he realizes his physical and mental potentialities."[39] Because of this "self-limiting" feature of class society, Dunayevskaya noted that in his early writings, Marx actually called for the "abolition" of labour.[40] Of course, capitalist society also presents an

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publish the introduction in their "Interim Bulletin" in 1947. It is also referenced in the Johnson Forest pamphlet, "Trotskyism in the United States, 1940-47: Balance Sheet" (Archive #788), that Johnson and Forest relate the difficulties in having their materials published in Worker Party documents: "The W.P. for three years kept the political analysis of the Russian state by the Johnson Forest tendency out of the pages of *The New International* and the internal bulletin" (Archive #806).

[38] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 17.

[39] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 18.

[40] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 19.

historical irony insofar as it furnishes the foundation, primarily through technological innovation, to realize a free society, that is, one not driven by material necessity and want. This insight raised an obvious question: what holds capitalist society back from reaching freedom? Dunayevskaya answered that it is the mode of production itself: "Technology has progressed so far that general want does not reign out of the nature of production but because of the *production relation*. It becomes necessary to put an end to that relationship to make it possible for the *nature* of production to assert itself."[41] In other words, to realize the benefits of technological advancement, the social relations of capitalist production must be surpassed.

Contrasting class society to socialist society, Dunayevskaya argued that socialist society must re-establish "self-activity" and realize the abolition of labour: "Hence the proletarian revolution is not only the revolutionary appropriation of the totality of the instruments of production, but is directed against the very mode of activity under capitalism, and 'does away with labour'."[42] The abolition of class society can only be achieved then by a fundamental change (revolution) in the mode of production. It is of the realization of unique human capacity that Dunayevskaya wrote, a perspective that fundamentally challenged vulgar assertions that socialism would be achieved through collectivism, as Dunayevskaya quoted Marx: " 'It is especially necessary to avoid ever again to counter-pose "society" as an abstraction, to the individual.'"[43]

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[41] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 19, italics in original.

[42] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 19, cites as *Archives of Marx and Engels,* Vol. III, Russian edition. Also *Gesamtausgabe,* Abteilung I, Band III.

Having articulated the key role played by labour in order to understand the difference between class and socialist society, Dunayevskaya turned her attention to the question of private property. Dunayevskaya quite correctly identified Marx's own assessment of the mistaken application of the term "private" to capitalist property relations: "In actual fact, wrote Marx, bourgeois private property is not private property at all, but based on 'the expropriation of the peasants, artisans, in general on the abolition of the method of production *resting on private property of the direct producer, on his conditions of production*' and 'develops to the degree that this private property and the method of production based on it is abolished.'"[44] In essence, argued Dunayevskaya, Marx's concern over property stemmed from the mode of production rather than the specifics of legal ownership (its appearance): "In and of itself, that is to say, without a high stage of industrial development, a change from private to communal ownership would be barren of historic significance."[45] Further, in her conclusion to "Labour and Society," she noted: "From the moment that the product of his labour did not belong to the direct producer, man became an 'object' for himself. ... Property is the power of disposal over the labour of others."[46] The combination of her analysis of the nature of labour—that is, alienated labour— as the determining or definitive factor in establishing the mode of production, and making property relations (as opposed to ownership) a corollary to the mode of production, allowed Dunayevskaya to challenge the assertion that the presence of statified property was sufficient to undermine capitalism and realize socialist society.

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[43] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 20.
[44] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 21, italics in original.
[45] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 22.
[46] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 22.

The state capitalist critique of Russia as articulated by Dunayevskaya was, at its most simple reduction, a critique of the fetishization of private property over the consideration of "self-activity" and labour. In 1942, Dunayevskaya further developed her argument on the Russian Question in an essay entitled "Is Russia Part of the Collectivist Epoch of Society?"[47] This essay was published posthumously; however, it demonstrated the refinement of the state capitalist position by the Tendency while it also challenged the contending position that Russia was a bureaucratic collectivist state. More importantly, it is in this essay that Dunayevskaya spoke directly to what she viewed as "Trotsky's error," delineating the emerging theoretical distinctions between herself and other elements within the Workers Party. Dunayevskaya clearly differed with Trotsky's decision to hold fast to the notion that Russia was a workers' state, but this essay draws into clear relief the basis of her differing opinion – Trotsky's "fetishism with state property": "[it] blinded Trotsky from analyzing correctly the development of that 'singular' form of private property, 'state power' and thus from discerning the *social* character of the counter-revolution when it came."[48] In other words, the failure to identify private property as control of the means of production, led Trotsky, like much of the revolutionary movement, "... [to keep] its eyes glued on the phenomena, property and politics, instead of keeping them focused on the essence: labour and production."[49] When one is focused on labour and production, as Marx was in his analysis of capitalism, Dunayevskaya argued that the nature of the Russian state becomes clear: it was a capitalist state.

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[47] It is most likely that this essay was written in 1942, although, no definitive date has been determined.

[48] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 27, italics in original.

Repeatedly in the essay, Dunayevskaya reminded the reader of the "Marxist ABCs" that define the productive process as the basis for labour's exploitation and the subsequent extraction of surplus value. In the case of Russia, she argued that the replacement of the capitalists by "the state" did not negate the exploitation (and the realization of surplus value) of the Russian worker:

> Look at Russia and tell me what the proletariat lacks in order to be ruler in that state. It is not the title of ownership. On the contrary, the Constitution of that country defines state property as property 'belonging to the whole people.' The legal title notwithstanding, the profits that come out of the Soviet industry go partly to the enterprises and partly to the state. The worker does not share in it, not because he does not 'legally' own it , but because his role in the process of production is such that he labours and gets paid for his labour power at its value... . The worker does not 'share the profits' because his relation to the means of production is such that when he has finished using the instruments, the product created (a commodity) through the union of labour power with the means of production, belongs not to himself, but to the enterprise to which he works.[50]

In a sense, the Johnson Forest tendency was fighting a "war on two fronts." On the one hand, the Tendency challenged the now Stalinist-dominated

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[49] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 25.
[50] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State Capitalism*, p. 28.

Communist Party, which continued to argue that the workers' revolution had been realized by the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Tendency rejected the majority position within the Workers Party which argued that a new, non-socialist/non-capitalist social formation had been realized by the Soviet Union (the bureaucratic collectivist thesis). Not surprisingly, Dunayevskaya would discover that the assertion of state capitalism was not well received within the Workers Party (the subject of the next Chapter) nor did it meet approval in wider academic circles (the subject of Chapter Four).

Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief biographical overview of Dunayevskaya's participation in Leftist politics in the United States. Although her initial interest was with the Communist Party, she found, for a limited time at least, a place in American and International Trotskyism. Dunayevskaya's biography, as was also argued in Chapter One, is always tied to the relationship between ideas and practice, true *praxis,* to cast her organizational and theoretical activities in specifically Marxist language. Undoubtedly, Dunayevskaya's participation in movements as varied as the early Black civil rights organizations, the committee for agricultural workers, and the formation of a Tendency within the Workers Party, played an integral role in the tone and tenor of her theoretical contributions. In other words, Dunayevskaya's philosophy was always informed by experience and practice – in fact, she would later articulate this idea in the phrase "practice as a form of theory". It is also without doubt that her proximity to Trotsky at a time of considerable political ferment imparted the sense that ideas, written words, and theoretical insights mattered.

Moving beyond biography, the chapter turned to the first collaborative idea, state capitalism, which led to the formation of the Johnson Forest tendency as a minority within the Workers Party. In order to assess the Soviet state differently from the dominant interpretations within Trotskyism, Dunayevskaya drew from a combined reading of the *Economic and Philosophic Notebooks* and *Capital* to define the Soviet state as a capitalist state. She arrived at this conclusion, quite different from Trotsky or Shachtman, by keeping Marx's notion of alienated labour at the centre of her analysis. When the mode of production is viewed in this manner, it is clear that workers in the Soviet Union continued to function as capital—rather than as free producers which would mark the end of capitalistic production. In a sense, Dunayevskaya successfully looked past the propaganda of the Stalinist Communist Party and even the perhaps "wishful thinking" of many on the Left to the activity of the revolutionary subject (the Russian workers) on "the ground". Perhaps most remarkably, this analysis was conducted through the "evidence" of economic success and revolutionary victory provided by the Soviets themselves.

The early theoretical studies undertaken by Dunayevskaya in order to articulate the state capitalist thesis provide the foundation and intellectual stimulus for the future development of the philosophy of Marxist Humanism. Importantly, as was demonstrated in this chapter, state capitalism began to unify Marx's own philosophical works with the more "empirical" *Capital*. For

Dunayevskaya-- although not yet quite articulated as such-- state capitalist analysis forced a deeper, more agent-centered understanding of the logic of capitalist society as a whole.

For those of us looking back on this historical moment of philosophical development, it can be difficult to make sense of the numerous twists and turns, breaks and ruptures that defined the politics of the late 1930s and 1940s. While the politics of this battle among "the Left" were likely miserable personal experiences—and no doubt made more difficult given Dunayevskaya's very personal relationship with Trotsky— they nonetheless opened the philosophical space for a very rich engagement with what it means to apply Marx's analysis to immediate and emerging history. And, while it has become a common lament to question why the Left "continuously divides over questions of orthodoxy," the debates and ideas put forward by Dunayevskaya demonstrated that something of importance was at stake. These were not esoteric questions and debates, nor were they only about possessing the "doctrinaire" truth. Instead, these debates were about liberation and freedom, the conditions that must necessarily prevail "after" the revolution if it is not to be "turned to its opposite." Answering the Russian Question, seen in this way, is world-historic and that answer should continue to resonate with those committed to realizing what Dunayevskaya would have named a truly "human" society. She made this importance present in her key essays on the nature of the Russian economy and her subsequent defense of CLR James' engagement with the bureaucratic collectivist position, to which we now turn.

Chapter Three

The Workers Party and Dueling Theories

Introduction

As was noted in the previous Chapter, after her initial state capitalist essay (1941), Dunayevskaya further interrogated the relationship of labour and production in order to determine the nature of the mode of production which characterized the Russian state. The essays and polemics which resulted from this research were first published by the Workers Party between 1942 – 1947 in either the *New International,* or internal party bulletins.[1] Dunayevskaya's purpose in this period appears to be two-fold. One purpose, which is the primary focus of this chapter, was to prove that Russia was a capitalist society in spite of the existence of statified property. This was accomplished by further study of Russian economic indicators, the refining of the state capitalist approach and through a critical engagement with other contending theories concerning the Russian state, particularly the bureaucratic collectivist approach.[2]

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[1] I say "first published" because in many instances these essays were re-published under the auspices of News and Letters.

[2] It would be more accurate to speak of "approaches" as there were many theories regarding the Russian state that highlighted the bureaucratic and collectivist nature of the society which emerged post-1917 – not least of which was Trotsky's own analysis. However, Dunayevskaya generally argued that all of the approaches shared in common a propensity to suggest that the bureaucracy had "stepped in" for private capitalism at the expense of workers, essentially countermanding the workers' state. In all of the various approaches, it was this element that allowed for the argument that the Russian state was a new social

The second purpose was to trace the historical lines along which post-Marx Marxist analysis departed from Marx's own understanding of capitalist political economy. Although these departures are not the focus of this chapter, it is important to bear in mind that state capitalist theory does not evolve separately from Dunayevskaya's subsequent theoretical work. In fact, state capitalist analysis furnished the opportunity for Dunayevskaya to think through many of the implications for agents and structures that derive from her particular application of Marx's core analysis of the capitalist mode of production. For this second purpose, she studied Lenin's works (which will become more important in the 1949 period leading up to her "Hegelian moment") and Luxemburg's work on accumulation, among others. It is also at this time that Dunayevskaya began to investigate the possibility of understanding revolutionary subjectivity outside of the confines of the category "worker". The core of this work focused on the Negro/Black movement in the United States and is the subject of Chapter Five.

This chapter will impose a "restricted order" on the increasingly expansive nature of Dunayevskaya's writings and focus on two key elements that emerge from this period. The first element focuses on her (and the Johnson Forest tendency's) response to a competing theory on the Russian state, the bureaucratic collectivist position being advocated by the majority in the Workers Party. Dunayevskaya's critical analysis of the bureaucratic collectivist thesis allowed her

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formation – and hence, regardless of differences in emphasis, Dunayevskaya finds all bureaucratic collectivist approaches to be theoretically deficient. For an interesting collection on this question see: Ernest E. Haberkern and Arthur Lipos, *Neither Capitalism or Socialism: Theories of Bureaucratic Collectivism*. Humanities Press: New Jersey, 1996.

to expand on state capitalist theory which highlighted the general logic of capitalist society without fetishizing private property. The second focus of this chapter will be on Dunayevskaya's empirical studies of the Russian state. In 1942, she wrote a second part to her "An Analysis of the Russian Economy" under the title "Politics and Economics." A revised portion of this essay was subsequently published in 1946 and 1947 as "The Nature of the Russian Economy" (Part II). Combined, these essays engaged the labour-production relationship which Dunayevskaya argued was the essence of capitalist social relations. The empirical "proof" of Russia's capitalist nature was demonstrated in the Soviet economic drive, that is -- to borrow from Marx-- the drive of "production for the sake of production." Finally, we will conclude by drawing together the philosophical work on labour and production, bureaucratic collectivism and the empirical studies on the Russian economy to summarize the most relevant insights developed by the Johnson Forest tendency as a result of these political engagements and intensive studies in the context of their early participation in the Workers Party.

Challenging Bureaucratic Collectivism

Bureaucratic collectivism is not a single coherent theoretical assessment of the Russian state. While several "varieties" appeared in and outside of the Workers Party, they generally opted for one of two political positions. One was to acknowledge the bureaucratic collectivist nature of the Russian state, but to still conclude that Russia was deserving of political support. This was a kind of moderated Trotskyism—Russia was not a workers state but not capitalist either—

and thus, "worthy" of international support. The other position was that Russia was a bureaucratic collectivist state, but the existence of this particular new social formation was not "worthy" of support. Both positions held to the idea that the Russian workers' revolution had failed, but that the law of value had been superseded by bureaucratic planning. Dunayevskaya viewed both positions as untenable, arguing that Russia was not a new social formation but, as previously noted, was the very embodiment of capitalism. To make this case, Dunayevskaya engaged in a sustained and spirited argument with representatives of the bureaucratic collectivist position within the Workers Party.[3]

Within the Workers Party, bureaucratic collectivism was often argued from two different camps. Shachtman held one view while Joe Carter articulated what is generally seen as a more rigorous and consistent theory of bureaucratic collectivism. In a recently published review of an edited volume on bureaucratic collectivism, Alex Callinicos argues that in the final analysis, Shachtman's position was hardly distinguishable from Trotsky's defense of Russia and was virtually untenable by the close of World War II.[4] Carter, on the other hand, focused on the nature of labour in the Soviet Union. Callinicos nicely summarizes Carter's theory:

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[3] Interestingly, the debate about the "Russian Question" and the nature of the Soviet Union continues to be raised by a variety of critical thinkers and left/socialist groups today. Bureaucratic collectivism is again being recalled as an explanatory framework for the Soviet state. See: Barry Finger, "On Bureaucratic Collectivism," *New Politics* 6, no. 3 (1997).

[4] Alex Callinicos, "State in Debate," *International Socialism*, no. 73 (1996): p. 3 of 7.

> Stalinist Russia is thus a reactionary state based upon a new system of economic exploitation, bureaucratic collectivism. The ruling class is the bureaucracy which through its control of the state collectively owns, controls, and administers the means of production and exchange. The basic motive force of the economy is organized and directed through state totalitarian planning and political terrorism. The toilers are compelled by the state (as well as economic necessity) to labour in the factory and fields. Forced labour is an inherent feature of present-day productive relations.[5]

The longer-term, historical judgment of bureaucratic collectivism is unclear, or at best double-edged. Shachtman's conservative cold war turn, Callinicos argues, is an inevitable political conclusion that is attributable to bureaucratic collectivist thought, as it is a logical conclusion that liberal democratic capitalism is a preferential system to the collectivist state born of an aborted socialist revolution.[6] Barry Finger, on the other hand, argues that the bureaucratic collectivist approach "freed analysis" from a growing orthodoxy within Trotskyism and Marxism more generally:

> ... bureaucratic collectivism facilitated the cleansing or jettisoning of the most mistaken views of revolutionary socialism and became a vehicle for the forceful reassertion and amplification of that cardinal principle of Marxism, namely the fundamental inseparability of socialism and democracy, and for the repositioning of that understanding at the very heart of the revolutionary socialist program.[7]

While it is evident that the historical judgment is at best ambiguous and still highly disputed, Dunayevskaya's response and analysis, offered contemporaneously to the development of the approach, demonstrated the very difficult theoretical debates within the Workers Party and the seriousness with which the proponents of various positions approached the development of an understanding of and position on the Russian state.

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[5] Callinicos, p. 3 of 7.
[6] Callinicos, p. 5 of 7.
[7] Finger, p. 2 of 7.

Dunayevskaya challenged bureaucratic collectivism primarily on two propositions. The first concerned the bureaucratic collectivist understanding of the nature of labour in a capitalist society. She argued that the bureaucratic collectivists fundamentally misunderstood what is "free" or alienated labour. The second proposition, drawn from the first, related to the bureaucratic collectivist argument that the law of value no longer pertained to the Russian state. Each of these propositions is examined in more detail below.

First, Dunayevskaya challenged the bureaucratic collectivist position on labour. The bureaucratic collectivist position, which ranged from being supportive to condemning Soviet social organization, hinged on seeing the Russian worker as "slave labour."[8] The bureaucratic collectivist position, which on the face of it did not appear particularly radical given working conditions in Russia at the time, derived from Marx's argument that the critical difference for workers in capitalist society is that the labourer is free. As Dunayevskaya summarized:

> Since 'free labour' is the differentia specifica of capitalist production and since it is non-existent in Russia [according to Bureaucratic Collectivists], it is in Russia, say Shachtman and Carter where forced (slave) labour is an inherent feature of the Russian economy and where we have a new, non-capitalist social order. ... Furthermore, Shachtman thinks that the collectivist epoch in Russia has

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[8] Archive #145.

> created a superior form, higher rate of production than under capitalism.[9]

On the face of it, this was not a bad argument; however Dunayevskaya argued that the only way one could come to such an analysis of the Russian state was by fundamentally misunderstanding Marx's use of the term "free labour." Again, Dunayevskaya asked her readers to consider carefully "Marxist fundamentals". Citing Volume I of *Capital*, she argued:

> Where the labourer is "free" "in the double sense that neither they themselves form part or parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, etc., nor do the means of production belong to them, as is the case of peasant proprietors", it is a "free" economy, characteristic of an industrialized civilization where the monopolist of the instruments of labour needs the labourer not "once for all" but for the time periods necessitated by production needs of an exchange economy.[10]

The bureaucratic collectivist approach argued that "free labour" is a condition, a social relation, that gives ownership of the labourer's labour to the labourer, which s/he can "freely" sell. Rather, Dunayevskaya contended: "It is a prime necessity to capitalist production that the worker be 'free' for where he has not been entirely separated from his means of production, he does not readily offer his labour power for sale to the owner of the means of production."[11]

Before one is tempted to jump to the conclusion that Dunayevskaya has created a distinction without a difference with regard to the nature of labour, it is worth following her argument one step further. The very foundation upon which capitalist production rests is on the appropriation of the commodity labour

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[9] Archive #145, underlining in original.
[10] Archive #140.
[11] Archive #142.

power—that is the abstracted, exchangeable value of individual workers taken as an aggregate. In order for labour power to be "commodified" the labourer must be "free" – that is, not directly implicated as the means of production -- so that s/he can "sell" that labour power for the measurement of time. This relationship between worker and capitalist is not about the dispossession of property *per se*, as it was treated by the bureaucratic collectivist approach, but instead is the very hallmark of the creation of capital. Marx made this argument clearly in "Wage Labour and Capital": "The capitalist, it seems, therefore, *buys* their labour with money. They *sell* him their labour for money. But this is merely the appearance. In reality what they sell to the capitalist for money is their labour *power*."[12] Marx went on to say "It is only the domination of accumulated, past, materialized labour over direct, living labour that turns accumulated labour into capital."[13] For Marx, the key antagonism between those forced to sell their labour power and the capitalist was the essential relationship which defined the capitalist mode of production: "Thus capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other."[14] Marx went on to say "If the whole class of wage-workers were to be abolished owing to machinery how dreadful that would be for capital, which without wage labour ceases to be capital."[15] However, the "freedom" of the labourer was only in relation to the means of production (that is the domination of dead labour over living labour) as the "free" labourer by necessity must sell her/his labour power to the capitalist in order to realize the means for her/his subsistence. Phrased differently, capitalist social relations, that is class relations, exist where the exchange of labour is freely conducted, separating the labourer from his commodified labour *power*.

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[12] Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Robert C Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 204.
[13] *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 208-209.
[14] *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 209-210.
[15] *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 215.

Returning to the bureaucratic collectivist argument, one wonders if the argument was misguided in the claim that capitalism required "free labour"? Absolutely not; the error, as recounted by Dunayevskaya, was that bureaucratic collectivists argued that "free labour" did not exist in the USSR; rather, they claimed that labour was "forced" under the direction and control of the state bureaucracy. This argument was a fundamental misunderstanding of "free labour" according to Dunayevskaya, as she queried the bureaucratic collectivists: "Will Carter and Kent please tell me when slave labour became an inherent feature of the Russian economy?"[16] In fact, she argued, the Russian economy and Stalin in particular knew that the "free" labour of the capitalist mode of production was the only mechanism which would allow Russia to "catch up" to industrialized states as it was the best method to ensure labour productivity. Further, it was not through theory that Russian state planners arrived at this position, but as a result of their own experience with the failure to realize productivity gains through the imposition of repressive labour laws:

> The state found that the legislation contradicted the primary goal: to catch up and outstrip the capitalist lands. That is why, but two short months before it was invaded by

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[16] Archive #143, underlining in original.

> Germany, the Russian state decided that the best method of extracting surplus labour, better than anti-labour legislation decreeing forced labour, was through piece work, which Marx had declared to be so ideally suited to capitalist production.[17]

Thus, Dunayevskaya viewed the bureaucratic collectivist argument as one that obscured the real, capitalist nature of the Russian state and thereby missed the very "Marxist" grounds upon which the state capitalist argument was premised. It also meant that those who subscribe to the bureaucratic collectivist approach missed the fundamental transformation of the Russian revolution into "its opposite."

Moving on to her second critique, Dunayevskaya turned her attention to what in Marxist shorthand is termed the "law of value". The debate about the law of value was one of Dunayevskaya's key points of engagement with the academic community; however, at this point in time, the discussion was specifically directed toward those in the bureaucratic collectivist camp. In arguing that the USSR was a new social formation, bureaucratic collectivists such as Shachtman and Carter contended that the reality was that the law of value did not operate in Russia. Of course, the argument followed that since the law of value did not pertain, it was not possible to judge Russian society as capitalist. However, given the presence of "forced labour" it also could not be named socialist. Dunayevskaya took great issue with the suggestion that the law of value was not operable in Soviet Russia. As she argued, in order to make the case plausible that the law of value no longer pertained in Russia, the advocates of bureaucratic collectivism would have had to demonstrate that surplus value was no longer being extracted from workers. Yet, the only real "proof" that the law of value did not operate in Russia, as articulated by the bureaucratic collectivist position, was that the state sets prices.[18] Price setting, in and of itself, noted Dunayevskaya, did not invalidate the law of value. Further, the GOSPLAN itself recognized that this was the step intended to bring Soviet pricing in line with world prices: "It is true that prices are fixed by the government. But since government decisions are arrived at neither by nor for people living on the planet of Mars, the GOSPLAN from the first held as its aim to bring industrial prices by degree to the level prevailing in more advanced countries."[19] Moreover, Dunayevskaya linked the presence of the law of value in the USSR as an unavoidable feature of a world market to the necessity of world revolution (a goal that was fading fast in the face of "socialism in one country"):

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[17] Archive #146, underlining in original.

> So long as the capitalist world market exists, the law of value would assert itself "like an over-riding law of nature". That was true as well when the workers state of Lenin-Trotsky existed. Monopoly of foreign trade, for a workers state, could accomplish no more than the protective tariff did for the capitalists – put off the day of reckoning. That is why our revolutionary internationalists worked for the world revolution and considered the Russian Revolution as a starter for the international revolution.[20]

In other words, in order to supersede the law of value, alienated labour must also be transcended internationally. The setting of prices was only a portion of the extraction of surplus value from labour and could not be argued as sufficient grounds for asserting the existence of a non-capitalist mode of production in Russia. Because capitalism was a global mode of production, concluded Dunayevskaya, the only remedy to the law of value is ultimately world revolution:

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[18] Archive #147.
[19] Archive #147, underlining in original.
[20] Archive #149.

> Theoretically what Marx always posed was the abolition of the capitalist mode of production. History has shown that capitalist private property can be abolished and the capitalist mode of production can continue. A revolutionary solution means a transformation in class relationships.[21]

Having argued that the bureaucratic collectivist position both misunderstood the concept of free labour and the role of the law of value in capitalist society generally and Russian society specifically, Dunayevskaya turned her theoretical attention more specifically to the question of surplus value. This necessarily forced her to take on a closer examination of the nature of production (that is the conditions and social relations that attended production) in the Soviet economy. In subsequent engagements between the State Capitalist tendency and the bureaucratic collectivist position, this debate was best encapsulated by Johnson's (CLR James') article published in *The New International* in 1943 entitled "Production for the Sake of Production: A Reply to Carter." Dunayevskaya also wrote a compelling defense of "production for the sake of production" which was subsequently published in a *Bulletin* of the Workers Party in 1944. Two articles, "Politics and Economics" and Dunayevskaya's defense of CLR James' article entitled "A Restatement of Some Fundamentals of Marxism Against Carter's Vulgarization", are instructive in establishing the centrality of surplus value to Dunayevskaya's analysis specifically and the state capitalist position more generally.

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[21] Archive #156.

Production for the Sake of Production

CLR James' 1943 article is remarkable as it is one of the first published essays from the State Capitalist tendency that clearly drew a link between Hegel and Marx's *Capital* while also drawing Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation* into the debate.[22] Taking a slightly different approach than Dunayevskaya, James focused on answering why the Russian state reverted to capitalist social relations; that is, why the extraction of surplus value remained integral to Russian economic policy. James' article asserted that understanding the capitalist mode of production necessitated a recognition that all capital is reducible to value: "...the worth of anything, [is] the amount of socially necessary labour time required for its production."[23] Thus, surplus can only be derived from what is termed "variable capital," that is, wage labour. Marx stated this relationship in a well-known formula:

total product = constant capital (c) + variable capital (v) + surplus value (s)

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[22] Archive #229. Dunayevskaya's "Politics and Economics" also challenged the use of Luxembourg's analysis, a very early precursor to her book length consideration of Luxemburg which would be published in 1981. Generally, the Tendency argued that Luxemburg represented a very flawed revision to Marx's understanding of capitalist accumulation by focusing on under-consumption rather than production. See Archive #436 for further discussion.

[23] Archive #229.

"[Marx] concluded that the compelling aim of capitalist production is to extract as much as possible from v, which it does chiefly by increasing c."[24] Moreover, Marx divided s into the "means of production" and the "means of consumption". It was Marx's contention throughout Volume II of *Capital* that the means of production would necessarily expand at a faster rate than the means of consumption. This growth is necessitated by the need for capital to self-expand, in other words, to reproduce its own capacity to realize surplus value. For this reason CLR James employed Marx's notion of production for the sake of production.[25] Importantly, James directly challenged the bureaucratic collectivist argument that "profit" and capitalist greed drive the capitalist mode of production. Rather, his argument made clear that it was the need for self-expansion that drove the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, it was at the point of this "economic" discussion that James made a corresponding link to Hegel's notion of the self-developing idea.[26] Dunayevskaya also made a similar argument in her "The Nature of the Russian Economy", her defense of James, and in the "Politics and Economics" essay, always with a focus on the centrality of the law of value.

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[24] Archive #229. The dominance of "c" over "v" is most commonly referenced as the domination of accumulated or dead labour over living labour.

[25] Karl Marx, and Ben Fowkes, *Capital : a Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977-), p. 739. There is something of a historical irony when considering the notion of "production for the sake of production" which is often attributed to the Soviet-styled command economy. In this sense there is an implicit recognition of the "capitalist" nature of the Soviet Union but the connection is never made to the wider logic of global capitalism which most certainly entertains "production for the sake of production" as it is the only means for realizing surplus value when the law of value dominates. But history is always the home of irony!

[26] Archive #238.

In other words, the accumulation and expansion of capital is facilitated by its own encounter with itself – that is via the circulation of capital in its productive capacity.

From the state capitalist perspective, the bureaucratic collectivist position confused the "appearance" of the profit motive and the personification of capital (the capitalist) with the essence of capitalism which is the self-expansion of capital itself. Bureaucratic collectivists equated the mode of production with specific property relations. When distorted in this way, the essence of capitalism is separated from its form and the fundamental workings and underlying logic of the capitalist mode of production is misconstrued. Dunayevskaya further argued that Marx himself identified the emergence of a capitalist mode of production outside of the strictures of private property, citing him as stating:

> What is private production without the control of private property? It is capitalist production in a new form. The development of productive forces demands their socialization. The capitalist class, seeing the handwriting on the wall, was meeting this demand "negatively," through the formation of stock companies, among other things. Marx said that this was the "abolition of capital as private property within the boundaries of capitalist production itself."[27]

In other words, capital can transcend one form of property relations without altering its essential relation—that is, a wage relationship which alienates the means of production. Not only then does Dunayevskaya contend that Marx was fully able to conceive of different social forms of the capitalist mode of production, but in Volume III, Marx defined socialization of capital to include the termination of such control[28] to realize the full development of capital: "This result [socialized capital] of the highest development of capitalist production is a necessary transition to the reconversion of capital into the property of the producers, no longer as the private property of individual producers, but as the common property of associates, as social property outright."[29] Dunayevskaya's point, however, was more modest than Marx's assessment of the future outcome of increasingly socialized property; her point was that private property as commonly understood as the private holdings of the means of production can be abolished (i.e., in the form statified property) without damaging the capitalist mode of production as a whole. As she noted: "Theoretically, what Marx always posed was the abolition of the capitalist mode of production. History has shown that capitalist private property can be abolished and the capitalist mode of production can continue. A revolutionary solution means a transformation of class relationships."[30]

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[27] Archive #155.

Dunayevskaya draws her point to a fine distinction, highlighting that the capitalist mode of production is "…not a thing but a social relation. Money or ownership of the means of production do not stamp man as a capitalist if there be wanting the correlative the wage worker. It is the relationship between wage labour and capital that determines the entire character of the mode of production. That is the crux of the matter. It is the domination of a class which determines production."[31] Moreover, as Dunayevskaya argued, it was this distinction, the social nature of capitalism that was missed by the bureaucratic collectivist position. In mistaking the form for the essence, Marx's prescient analysis was reduced to a vulgarized interpretation of the nature of the Russian economy. Further, such mistaken analysis on the part of the bureaucratic collectivists (among others) caused revolutionary efforts and attention to be diverted, misdirected, and ultimately dispersed in such a manner as to be transformed into support for the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union. Ultimately, this is what was at stake for Dunayevskaya. She nicely summarized the importance of the engagement with the bureaucratic collectivist position and the Russian question as follows:

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[28] One should be attentive to the way in which Marx uses the term "socialization" as it is a complete opposite of its common parlance today which would see the socialization of the means of production as being turned over to state control—certainly, another hang-over of the Russian Question.

[29] Karl Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), p. 517. This leads to a potentially revolutionary reading of the events of 1989.

[30] Archive #156, underlining in original.

> Whether the term, bureaucratic is used complimentarily, as Shachtman does, or as equally reactionary with capitalism, as Carter does, their theory of a new social order conflicts with the fundamental Marxist concept of what constitutes a class and what determines the structure of an economy. Our fight with them over the name applied to describing Russia is not a polemic over words, it is a question of defining the content or economic structure and movement of that society.[32]

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[31] Archive #156, underlining in original.

[32] Archive #158. Notably, I have chosen to focus on Dunayevskaya's 1942 essay "Politics and Economics". Although Dunayevskaya's defense of CLR James and critique of Carter (Archive #167) is arguably the more concise essay in terms of coherent argumentation and structure, I find the "Politics and Economics" essay to invoke more passion and its more "raw" approach to give a better sense of the "dialogue" that was on-going between the different factions and Dunayevskaya's "in the moment" response to this alternative answer to the Russian question.

The challenge of answering the "Russian Question" then was recast as one of identifying the various mechanisms utilized by capitalism for its self-expansion and idenfifying the class relations that dominate its social formation – applicable in the first instance to Russia but with world-historic implications.

A Word on Politics and Economics

Before turning to Dunayevskaya's empirical studies of the Soviet economy, it is valuable to examine what she identified as the source of the analytical failures of the bureaucratic position. For Dunayevskaya, this "source" was derived from a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between politics and economics. She argued that the source of the analytical errors made by Shachtman and Carter derived from their emphasis on politics over economics. Arguing the Shachtman and Carter had forgotten their "Marxist ABCs" she noted: "Do Marxists repeat time and time again that the economic structure is the all-important foundation upon which the political superstructure rests merely 'for propaganda'? 'Every political superstructure in the last analysis is determine [sic] by the production relations prevailing in a given society.'"[33] Dunayevskaya's argument is not reductionist thinking; further, she highlighted the "mutual reinforcement" of economics and politics. The error creeps in when a theoretician

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[33] Archive #160. The employment of the "Marxist ABC" is not unique to Dunayevskaya and betrays her close adherence to Lenin's writings, even when not directly referenced. The discussion, for example, of politics vs. economics was one which was key to Lenin's engagement with the Russian Communist Party, particularly in reference the famous Trade Union Debates. Vladimir Il ich Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 9 (New York: International Publishers Co., 1943), p. 54.

(in this case the bureaucratic collectivists) chose to over-emphasize one at the expense of the other. When turned to an analysis of post-revolutionary Russia, such an analysis had a devastating effect:

> It is such understanding of the integration of politics and economics that Shachtman and Carter lack and thus fail to apply in the present dispute. Politics appears of transcendent importance over economics only because the politician and the boss are one, or rather we are not dealing with a politician of old but a new one, one "who executes economic functions," manages industry. Totalitarian politics, of course, brooks no opposition… in Russia… but we have vastly overestimated the political factor, as if it were independent of economics.[34]

A failure to grasp the relationship between politics and economics obscures the way in which the mode of production structures and influences the social formation of a given society. The result was that Soviet bureaucracy appeared to dominate economics, whereas Dunayevskaya argued that the bureaucracy was produced by economic relations and in turn acted upon those relations. Further, by treating economics and politics as separate spheres, an ideological position such as bureaucratic collectivism can be promoted without having to fully account for other discrepancies that would challenge the conclusion that Russia was a collectivist society. For example, the assertion that "free labour" did not exist or that the law of value had been transcended in Russia, as the bureaucratic collectivists argued. Looking ahead, we can see the continuation of this error in treatments of Marxian theory throughout the academy and beyond. One can certainly draw out the developing lineage of a "new left" (*circa* 1967-1968) determined to defend the Soviet Union potentially at the expense of sound theoretical and empirical analysis, if we subscribe to Dunayevskaya's analysis of the relationship between politics and economics.

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[34] Archive #161.

Empiricizing State Capitalism

Dunayevskaya's essays and works from 1942 clearly referenced statistical information with regard to the status and success of the Russian economy and her published works from 1943 through to 1947 drew on key economic information made available by the Soviet state. The two essays considered in this section specifically build on the argument already advanced – that Stalinist Russia was a capitalist state. What is particularly relevant about these writings is that Dunayevskaya was presenting a "real Marxism" that linked Marxist philosophy to the "on the ground circumstances" present in the Soviet Union. The endeavor to relate concrete experience to theory and subsequently recognize experience as a form of theory itself will continue to define Dunayevskaya's philosophical works throughout her life. This "groundedness" imbues her work, uniquely, with immediacy and prescience.

Having examined both "Labour and Economy" and "Politics and Economics" which served as introductions to Parts I and II of Dunayevskaya's empirical studies of the Russian economy, we now turn to an examination of her empirical evidence in support of the state capitalist thesis. In "An Analysis of the Russian Economy" (Part I) Dunayevskaya argued that the only way to understand the "law of motion" of Russian society was to examine "…physical output of selected sections of both heavy and light industry as well as agricultural production, against a background of statistics on population and national income."[35] She developed her analysis utilizing Marx's division of the means of production vs. the means of consumption (Departments I and II). As previously noted, Marx's own analysis demonstrated that the means of production would grow faster (and in greater proportion) than the means of consumption in order to achieve the self-expansion of capital (that is, production for the sake of production). Dunayevskaya applied this assumption to Russia and found that, once adjusted for volume of production, output was far below that anticipated by the first five-year plan, but that growth in Department I did outpace Department II:

Department I
Means of production - 61.7% achievement of the plan

Department II
Means of consumption - 7% achievement of the plan

She concluded: "Particularly poignant is the record of how the production of means of consumption not only showed no increase in production, but starkly reveals a *decrease* from even the 1928 levels."[36] Subsequent to the government publishing the results of the first five year plan, GOSPLAN was less inclined to highlight the "success" of the Plan (which were at best exaggerations). The second plan (1932 – 1937), Dunayevskaya reported, received no coverage in Russia as "The press was busy describing in glowing language the witch-hunt the state was staging, the infamous Moscow Frame-up Trials."[37] The results were finally published in 1939; however, when compared with world production, Russian production "…had not only not outdistanced but was a long way from 'catching up' with the capitalist world and compares not too favourably with 'feudal' Japan."[38] For the third Five-Year Plan, the Soviets focused on the question of per capita production, effectively transferring blame for poor economic performance from "the Plan" (that is, the State) to labour, more precisely the productivity failures of Russian workers.

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[35] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 37. The archives note that "This study of the first three Five-Year Plans was the first anywhere based on original Russian documents." Archive #8. While this claim may certainly be true of the 1928 – 1941 period, the work by Savel Zimand also was conducted "largely from Russian official sources" (Zimand, p. 4). While the introduction to Zimand's report notes the capitalist "concessions" made in Russia, Dunayevskaya's analysis is that these are not "concessions" but defining features of capitalism in the Russian state. However, the significance of Zimand's work is that outside of Communist and Trotskyist parties in the United States, there was a more general acceptance of the notion that Russia was implementing capitalist practices. Of course, WWII and the advent of Cold War bipolarity and ideological thinking replaced this sentiment in the post-war era.

[36] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 41. It should be noted that Dunayevskaya adjusted the Soviet numbers which originally reported production in terms of the value of the ruble – which she claimed was

While today it is not seen to be a significant revelation to argue that the Five-Year Plans failed to bring the Russian economy to pace with other industrialized nations, Dunayevskaya's analysis went deeper than highlighting what were to become obvious economic failures in the Soviet Union, demonstrating, instead, the very capitalist nature of the economy. A workers' state, could one have existed, would certainly have been organized differently and would not have replicated class society as found in other capitalist states. To further illustrate this point, Dunayevskaya considered three defining elements of

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inflated— to an analysis based on volume of production (ie, the number of items etc.), p. 41.

[37] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 42.

[38] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 44.

the Russian economy: (1) the turnover tax and state budget; (2) the free market in the countryside and private property in the *Kolkhozy*; and, (3) the ineffectiveness of repressive labour laws and the resulting implementation of differential wages and *Stakhanovism*.

The turnover tax clearly illustrated the exploitative nature of the Russian state. Dunayevskaya, citing Marx, noted that "the only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions of modern peoples is their national debt" and their "repayment" necessarily takes the form of taxation.[39] And, undoubtedly, Marx would not have been surprised to find, as Dunayevskaya reported, the reliance of the Soviet treasury on what was generally termed the turnover tax implemented in 1929. The need to tax the general population was exasperated by the inability of the state to secure international financing and the subsequent world-wide depression; hence, not only was the population the most immediate source of revenue for the state, but the burden of debt was also borne by the people. Again, in order to demonstrate the intentionality of the tax, Dunayevskaya noted that it was purposefully set lower on heavy industry than consumables, such as bread and kerosene. Unlike a traditional sales tax, the turnover tax was "... a fixed percentage of the total sales value of merchandise, including the amount of tax."[40] Dunayevskaya further noted that the tax discriminated even within the category of consumables:

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[39] Karl Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915),p. 827.
[40] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 47.

"... while women of the 'intelligentsia' are taxed 68% for their perfume, the peasant women are taxed 88% for their kerosene."[41]

The overall success of the tax was manifested, according to Dunayevskaya, in swelling state coffers and the "socializing" of the state's economic plan. Thus, the workers themselves subsidized the state's capital accumulation, Dunayevskaya claimed at a rate of contribution that provided 79% of state revenue.[42] However, the tax alone did not isolate the state from the ill effects of forced agricultural collectivization and a worldwide economic crisis. From her examination of official Soviet census numbers, Dunayevskaya concluded that millions died during the famine years.[43] However, as tragic as the famine and forced collectivization were for the people, the notable observation here was that these crises and disasters did not weaken the Russian state sufficiently to realize its collapse. Dunayevskaya was forced to address the mechanism by which the regime survived:

> That the regime was able to survive such a catastrophe is in no small measure due to the reality of the world crisis [in agriculture]. Whereas the world crisis on the one hand, aggravated the internal situation in Russia by upsetting its financial plans, it had, on the other hand, likewise induced such combustible situations in each of the capitalist countries that none of these dared take advantage of the

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[41] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 48.
[42] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 47.
[43] Dunayevskaya's claim was that the annual census disclosed a death toll exceeding 15 million as a result of famine. However, there continues to be debate about the actual number of deaths attributable to the famine and Stalinization. What is not debated is that the death rate was significant and directly related to the state's implementation of forced collectivization combined with drought anomalies.

> internally weak Soviet Union to the extent of attacking its borders.[44]

At this point in her writings, Dunayevskaya was building the case that the Russian state, capitalist in nature, only "succeeded" at the expense of the workers. Moreover, the levels of exploitation and immiseration were experienced differently among different workers and social groups, thus demonstrating that class society was a key feature of the Soviet state. For example, Dunayevskaya noted that the implementation of a "free market" in the countryside created a class antagonism expressed in the form of the *Kolkhozy*:

> In 1935 the *Kolkhozy* were granted the permanent use of the land and the *Kolkhozniki* the following private property rights: their dwelling, one half to two and one-half acres of land (depending upon the region) and the following livestock: one cow, two calves, one sow and its litter, up to ten sheep or goats, unlimited poultry and rabbits and up to ten beehives. ... Since all produce of his private property was his and the sale of it on the open market was unencumbered by a turnover tax, the *Kolkhoznik* began to pay a lot of attention to the care of his own small lot of land, where he carried on diversified farming.[45]

By creating a class division within the countryside and between those with tax exemptions and the workers, the Russian state effectively established a capitalist social formation even while clinging to the myth of socialism in a single state and promoting collectivized agriculture.

Of course, class division was not restricted to the countryside. As Dunayevskaya's studies demonstrated, the state attempted first to control workers through the institution of repressive labour laws and later, when these failed, by creating a labour aristocracy. For example, Dunayevskaya recounted several initiatives implemented by the state, including: the use of "labour passports" to restrict job movement; the creation of a system of fines and penalties for "truancy"; and the formation of state labour reserves with mandatory contract periods.[46] However, the Russian state did not realize the productivity gains it had hoped for as workers creatively circumvented these repressive measures. In response, the Russians revived an earlier idea of using differential compensation (ending the official policy of depersonalization of wage rates) to induce higher productivity. From 1935 forward, the government utilized a system of rewards for productive industrial workers, modeled on the ideal miner, Alexsey Stakhanov. As Dunayevskaya recounted:

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[44] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 53.
[45] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 54.

> Armed with Stakhanovism, the state was able to revive the 1931 slogan ["let there be an end to depersonalization"], for now they had the wherewithal to enforce it. Piecework was made the prevailing system of work in Russia. In the state of Lenin-Trotsky, where the *Subbotnik* [voluntary labour brigades, "communist labour"] was the hero, the range of pay was one to three; in the Stalinist state, where the Stakhanovite is the hero, the range of pay is one to twenty.[47]

Not only did the Stakhanovites establish unrealizable production targets, argued Dunayevskaya, but the creation of this higher paid worker also lead to an expansion in the consumption of luxury items:

> Ending depersonalization and creating this extreme differentiation in pay had its corollary in ending rationing and producing luxury goods, for the rise in pay would have

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[46] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 59.
[47] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 62. Further, for an essay on *Subbotniks*, see Vladimir Il ich Lenin, *V. I. Lenin, Collected Works* Volume 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), pp. 123-125.

> meant nothing to the Stakhanovites if they could not put it to use. It is interesting, therefore, to note that whereas production of articles of mass consumption kept little pace with the demand for them, the production of luxury goods leaped almost to the miraculous heights achieved in the production of means of production goods.[48]

More poignantly, perhaps, Dunayevskaya documented that the average worker in Russia found his or her standard of living much diminished by 1939.

Ultimately, each of these state practices, that is the implementation of a turnover tax, the creation of the Kolkhozy, and the use of Stakhanovism (really, the creation of a labour aristocracy) all spoke to the class nature of the Russia state. Moreover, Dunayevskaya closed her first article with a reflection on the role of the intelligentsia in fulfilling the role of ruling class in Russia: "The 'most advanced' of the intelligentsia, 'the genuine creators of a new life,' as Molotov called them—those who are the real masters over the productive process – constitute a mere 3.4 million or 2.05% of the total population."[49] A workers' state, indeed.

Dunayevskaya's Part I analysis ended without providing much in the way of political analysis, the more critical comments were presented in Part II, "The Nature of the Russian Economy."[50] In this essay, Dunayevskaya further concretized her argument that Russia was a capitalist state:

> The profound simplicity of Marx's method of analysis of capitalist society revealed that, given the domination of the law of value, which is a law of the *world market*, a *given*

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[48] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 62.
[49] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 70.
[50] Keeping in mind, of course, that Dunayevskaya had intended the article to be published as a unified whole; however, the time lag for publishing Part I (1942, 1943) and Part II (1946, 1947) is quite significant.

> society would remain capitalist even if one or all of several conditions prevailed: (1) the exchange between the subdivision of the department producing means of production were effected *directly*, that is, without going through the market; (2) the relationships between the department producing means of production and the one producing means of consumption were planned so that no ordinary commercial crises arose; and, finally, (3) even if the law of centralization of capital would reach its extreme limit and all capital were concentrated in the hands of "a single capitalist or... a single capitalist society."[51]

The Russian state had, according to Dunayevskaya, realized the concentration of capital and superseded "private property". However, the state continued to fulfill the "role" of owners of the means of production and ensured that the main goal of capitalism was realized -- that is, the extraction of surplus value from workers. The "Nature of the Russian Economy" documented the specific turn of the "counter-revolution" and argued that its emergence was virtually unrecognized "in the moment":

> The counter-revolution did not make a "formal" appearance, with arms in hand, and therefore it was hard to recognize it. Along with the bureaucratization of the apparatus and loss of political control over the state by the proletariat, the relations of production were undergoing a transformation.[52]

The loss of political control by the soviets, argued Dunayevskaya, was fully formalized in the 1936 "Stalinist" constitution which recognized "... the intelligentsia as a special 'group,' distinct from workers and peasants. With this juridical acknowledgment of the existence of a new ruling class went the guarantee of the protection of state property from 'thieves and misappropriators.'"[53] The counter-revolution was consolidated in this political document and it was merely a case of "history" to review the resulting relations between labour and capital in Russia – as Dunayevskaya argued, the two contending forces in *any* capitalist state.

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[51] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 71.
[52] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 74.

Dunayevskaya closed this essay by reviewing the status of labour and capital in the Russian state. Rather than repeating her previous statistical evidence in detail, she carefully unpacked the story of the misery of labour and the ability of capital to expropriate and oppress the working class in Russia. And, of course, she recounted how the law of value underpinned this relationship, as one would anticipate in an examination of a capitalist state. Moreover, Dunayevskaya demonstrated that the Russian state was well aware of the relevance of the law of value in terms of its own planning. For example: "The Russian exploiters are so well aware of the fact that surplus value, in the aggregate, is uniquely determined by the difference between value of the product and the value of labour power, that the Plan for 1941 stipulated openly that the workers are to get a mere 6.5 percent rise in wages for every 12 percent rise in labour productivity."[54] This acknowledgment on the part of the Russia state was made much more obvious in a decision to change the method of teaching *Capital* in Russia, which will be taken up in the next chapter. In the final analysis, Dunayevskaya's argument that Russia was state capitalist was proven on two fronts: by her statistical studies and by her logical analysis of the political effects of Russian state policies on the class nature of Russian society.

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[53] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 76.
[54] Dunayevskaya, *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, p. 80.

Conclusion

This Chapter began by promising to impose a "restricted order" on Dunayevskaya's expanding philosophical writings. As a result, our consideration of her theoretical work was concentrated on refinements to state capitalist analysis, primarily through an engagement with bureaucratic collectivism and empirical studies of the Russian five year plans. Three elements of Dunayevskaya's thinking and analysis emerge from this consideration. The first element was the clear definition of what constitutes the capitalist mode of production. The second element is found in the delineation of what was at stake in answering the Russian question "correctly"—that is, from within Marx's own analysis. And the third element, while only in nascent form here, is the beginning of an agent-centered, humanist reading of Marx.

Dunayevskaya clearly defined the essence of the capitalist mode of production. By analyzing the Soviet economy from the perspective of production and its ensuing social relations, Dunayevskaya built on her earlier challenge to the "fetishization" of private property. While her first essay on state capitalism (discussed in Chapter Two) asserted that capitalism existed when the workers are capital (that is, an exchangeable commodity), her theoretical and empirical essays covered in this chapter demonstrated the errors that could and did result from setting property relations above production relations. Perhaps even more to the point was Dunayevskaya's argument that "private property" had always been a misnomer. "Private" did not mean that the ability to dispense with the means of production was held by a single capitalist, but that the means of production are not the property of the labouring class that produced value. Moreover, class society was created when the labourer was alienated from production. This alienation, as Marx named it, created by the wage-labour relationship that is essential for the production of surplus value.

On the face of it, this appears to be a common place understanding of Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production. However, Dunayevskaya made her analysis even clearer and to the point when she challenged the bureaucratic collectivist approach on the grounds of its misunderstanding of what "free" labour looks like in the Russian context. Arguably, Dunayevskaya's approach to the Russian economy was informed by the *1844 Manuscripts* in such a way that alienation remained at the fore of her analysis which made much clearer the relationship of labour to abstracted labour power, discussed so insightfully by Marx in his first chapter of *Capital*, Volume I. With such insight in hand, it was impossible to declare the Soviet economy socialist as workers were most certainly alienated from their labour power. Bureaucratic collectivists could agree up to this point with Dunayevskaya. But the failure to realize that statified property still extracted surplus value from workers, still imposed a wage-labour relationship, meant that the emphasis on bureaucracy overlooked the capitalist nature of the Russian economy.

Understanding what made capitalism capitalism feeds into the second element arising from Dunayevskaya's theoretical and empirical works on the

Soviet economy – that is, arriving at the "correct" assessment of the Russian state. As noted in Chapter Two and again in this Chapter, answering the Russian Question was a preoccupation of the Workers Party (as well as others) in the 1940s. What is apparent from Dunayevskaya's analysis was that a great deal was (and remains) at stake in the answer to this question. If the Soviet Union was judged to be socialist, then the Workers Party and all revolutionists of the time would be obliged to support the Communist Party and endeavor to realize a soviet-style state elsewhere. On the other hand, should the Soviet Union be found to be a new social formation, a bureaucratic state, assessments would have to be made about the nature of political support to be offered in such an instance. Dunayevskaya's state capitalist analysis, however, argued against the view that the revolution had been fully realized in the Soviet state and instead asserted that such a possibility in one state was simply an impossibility. This answer to the Russian Question, while perhaps disappointing to those who held fast to the hope of a successful revolution, reasserted the international nature of Marx's analysis in general, and revolutionary organization specifically. In other words, Dunayevskaya wished to see the successes of 1917 furthered rather than deformed by Stalin's counter-revolution. Such an answer to the Russian Question meant a rejection (potentially) of vanguardism and a renewed study of the centrality of value in understanding the mechanism of capitalist reproduction.

Finally, when these two elements are combined, it is again apparent that Dunayevskaya's eyes were always firmly on the structure of class society and the agent that is at the centre to value production while at the same time alienated from that centre. While she did not used the term humanism here to define Marx's approach, it is clear that the social relations among people are of key importance to both defining the current system and realizing its over-throw. Given the debates of the time, Dunayevskaya's and the state capitalist Tendency's assessment of the Russian state was revolutionary and would necessarily turn her attention to the variety of revolutionary subjectivities that can come to play in the process of revolutionizing a mode of production. However, before taking on the question of revolutionary subjectivities, Dunayevskaya first broadened the debate about the Soviet state from an internal Workers Party forum to a wider academic audience by taking the value debate to the pages of the *American Economic Review*. It is to her assessment of the changes in the teaching model of *Capital* in Soviet Economics that we now turn.

Chapter Four

Teaching Economics in the Soviet Union

Introduction

At the close of the previous Chapter, an argument was made that within socialist organizations arriving at the "correct" answer to the Russian Question was both philosophically and practically important. On the one hand, an answer that was rooted in Marx's work could (and did, according to Dunayevskaya) provide an "early warning system" against counter revolution. On the other hand, practically speaking, a "correct" answer provided political direction with regard to international working class organization and (potentially) freed these revolutionary organizations from an undesirably close association with the Russian Communist Party and Stalin's perversions of the revolution. To a certain extent, Dunayevskaya's studies of the Russian economy, as previously discussed, fall into this second category of "practical matters". Although she was certainly theoretically grounded and her work brilliantly merged Marx's theory of capitalist production with the empirical realities of the Russian state under Stalin's direction, her arguments were largely intended for an "internal audience" among the Workers' Party and those engaged in Party and Organization debates.

This Chapter turns to the philosophical and theoretical matters imbricated within the Russian Question by focusing on the relationship of Russian economic theory to Marx's theory, proposing that the Russians were well aware that their economic policies could not be reconciled with a "workers' state" or socialism. Dunayevskaya proved this intentionality through an examination of the teaching curriculum advocated by Party theorists. Reaching out to an external audience, Dunayevskaya published a translation of a Soviet change in policy about teaching *Capital.* This "outreach" was accomplished first by translating a Russian article for the *American Economic Review* and by submitting her own commentary on the article. The translated document, entitled "Teaching of Economics in the Soviet Union", had been published in the Russian journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* (1943).[1] The article and Dunayevskaya's commentary on the change in teaching policy are important for further establishing the theoretical ground for the state capitalist position. Moreover, the responses these two articles drew at the time highlight the propensity of the intellectual Left to defend the Russian Communist Party rather than critically engage the philosophical underpinnings of what was purported to be the "revolutionary or workers' state". This Chapter briefly recounts the changes advocated by the Soviets with regard to teaching economics and then examines Dunayevskaya's commentary on these changes. Finally, the Chapter concludes by examining the criticisms leveled at her assessment of the theoretical importance of the policy change and considers her rejoinder as published in the *American Economic Review*.

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[1] In her archives, Dunayevskaya retained copies of her correspondence with the *American Economic Review* about the translation. It should be recorded here that Dunayevskaya's translation was, in turn, reviewed by another Russian language translator to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the document. Dunayevskaya's translation was then accepted for publication (Archive #8962-8980).

Before turning directly to the article on teaching economics in the Soviet Union, a word of justification needs to be offered as to why an entire Chapter is devoted to what amounts to two short submissions by Dunayevskaya. Though a prolific writer over the course of her lifetime, Dunayevskaya's works are not frequently addressed by the scholarly community. However, the coverage of the *American Economic Review* article reached beyond the sectarian Left in the United States, engaged prominent (though radical) economists and even raised mention in the *New York Times*.[2] In other words, this is one of the earliest opportunities to see, at least in a small way, the manner of critique that could be leveled against the state capitalist theory being developed by the Tendency. Moreover, references to these articles and exchanges continue to have presence in the current academic community.[3] Further, Dunayevskaya's commentary and rejoinder represented a consolidation of the arguments that were being made within the Workers Party debates and demonstrated the applicability of state capitalist theory to the study of economics *writ large*.

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[2] See: Will Lissner. "Soviet Economics Stirs Debate Here." *New York Times*, 1 October 1944, p. 30. Will Lissner had also founded the academic journal *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* in 1941.

[3] While it is difficult to judge the motives of individual scholars, it is interesting to note that some one as prolific and published as Dunayevskaya received little attention from the scholarly community. As for current considerations of Dunayevskaya's work on the question of Soviet Economic policy, the *American Economic Review* article is referenced at: "Research in Former Soviet Archives on Issues of Historical Political Economy," the University of Warwick, http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/faculty/harrison/archive/ [accessed July 7, 2006]. See also: M.C. Howard and J.E. King, " 'State Capitalism' in the Soviet Union," *History of Economics Review – Electronic Archive*, vol. 34, Summer 2001, http://hetsa.fec.anu.edu.au/review/ejournal/dispvol.asp?vol=34 [accessed July 7, 2006].

Soviet Revisionism

The Soviet article began by assuring readers that a revision to the way political economy was taught in the Soviet Union was necessary to "…prevent misunderstandings and false interpretations."[4] The first safeguard that needed to be implemented, according to the authors, was to restructure the teaching of *Capital*: "…it is clear that to follow mechanically the structure of Marx's *Capital* in a study of the principles of the given science [political economy] can only cause harm."[5] The authors argued that the structure of *Capital* – that is the order of the development of key ideas-- did not allow students the opportunity to learn the historical development of the science of political economy. The goal, they claimed, was to teach political economy in accordance with the "historical principle".[6] For these authors, Marx's treatment of the "commodity" as the starting point of his work violated this "principle":

> Commodity production, exchange and money precede the appearance of a capitalist production. The beginnings of commodity production arose many thousands of years before the capitalist era. By the end of the Middle Ages the production of commodities and the circulation of money had already reached a rather high degree of development. Nevertheless, commodity production becomes the

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[4] Raya Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," *The American Economic Review* 34, no. 3 (1944): p. 504.
[5] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 507.
[6] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 509.

> dominating form of production and assumes an all-pervading character only under capitalism.[7]

The previous statement should raise one's suspicions immediately. Obviously, Marx's own intent in *Capital* was to study the "law of motion" of capital, under which the commodity-form takes on a unique character. To assert the ahistorical or longer-historical life of the commodity in general served two very political purposes, which was subsequently revealed in the article. First, in order to establish "older" forms of commodity, money, etc. the revisionists led the reader to conclude that these are enduring qualities that adopt different characteristics under different modes of production; thus, commodity, money etc. need not be abolished under socialist society, but simply are imbued with new characteristics. Second, and this was the key revision, it was argued that the law of value could and did operate in the Soviet system, represented by the authors as both a socialist and a workers' state.

Rather than have the "student" of political economy learn about the commodity-form and the law of value as Marx first introduced these themes, Soviet students would learn the "correct" role of the law of value:

> In particular, in our instruction and textbook literature the incorrect idea took root that in the economics of socialism there is no place for *the law of value*. This idea clearly contradicts the numerous statements of the masters of Marxism and the whole experience of socialist construction. It is well known that the law of value began to operate long before the rise of capitalism; Engels estimated the 'age' of this law to be some five to seven thousand years. After the abolition of capitalism, socialist

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[7] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 509.

> society through its state subordinates the law of value and consciously makes us of its mechanism (money, trade, price, etc.) in the interests of socialism, in the interests of planned direction of the national economy.[8]

In case the reader was still unclear the authors summarized their position succinctly by stating: "The notion that the law of value plays no role in socialism is, in essence, opposed to the whole spirit of Marxist political economy."[9]

Perhaps most telling in this article was the revision of Marx's classic statement from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. The authors, prior to asserting the law of value operates under socialism, discussed the nature of socialist society and the economy ("Socialism is inconceivable without a plan").[10] Given the all-importance of "the Plan":

> ... the planned administration of the national economy is unrealizable because capitalism is based on private property in the means of production. Private property creates competition. It divides, atomizes separate parts of the economic organism of the country... . Under capitalism, chaos, anarchy of production, blind laws of the market dominate... . An entirely different picture is presented by the socialist system ... . In these conditions the national economy of the country cannot avoid development according to plan... .[11]

What was the result of this reorganization of the national economy? Distribution was recast in relation to labour: "The guiding principle of social life under socialism is: from each according to his ability, to each according to his labour."[12] Moreover, the authors did not envision labour in its abstract form, that is, labour power, but instead argued: "Distribution must be based on the principle of labour – products must be distributed among the members of society according to the quantity and quality of labour expended by each. If we should adopt any other principle of distribution – whether such other principle be one of equal distribution or distribution according to need – society could not normally function and expand."[13]

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[8] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 519.
[9] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 519.
[10] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 518.
[11] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 518.

Having both established that labour (in quality and quantity) should guide socialist distribution (in opposition to Marx's assertion of need) and that the law of value operates in socialist society, the revisionists turned their theoretical eye to the question of manual vs. mental labour. Again, in contradistinction to Marx, socialist society was seen to necessitate a labour hierarchy:

> Again under socialism the deepest roots of the age-old opposition between intellectual and physical work are uprooted. Nevertheless, a distinction between physical and intellectual work still exists. ... In other words, there exist differences between skilled and unskilled work, and between work of various degrees of skill. ... As a result of this, the measure of labour and measure of consumption in a socialist society can be calculated only on the basis of the law of value.[14]

Although the authors went to great lengths to differentiate the law of value under socialism from its "capitalist" counterpart, the outstanding sentiment of the article derived from the privileged position granted to the Soviet state. This was not a state defined as a "workers' state" or even a democratic state, instead it was the Soviet State, the guardian of "the plan", the property holders, the "law of motion" for industrial development. Moreover, but not surprisingly, the document praised Stalin for furthering Marxist-Leninist economics:

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[12] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 518.
[13] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 519.
[14] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 522.

> Of course, it would be an absurd and uncritical approach to presume that Marx and Engels would foresee and foretell the concrete, practical way to employ the law of value in the interests of socialism. These ways are worked out in the course of the richest practice of socialist construction in the USSR and were generalized by the genius of Comrade Stalin, who showed how the Soviet state puts at the service of socialism such instruments of capitalist economy as money, trade, banks, etc. . The assertions of Stalin on the fate of the economic categories of capitalism under conditions of socialist society are theoretic generalizations from the magnificent experience of socialist construction in the USSR and signify a new stage in the development of the science of Marxist-Leninist economics. These statements are among the most important principles of the political economy of socialism created by Comrade Stalin.[15]

Overblown rhetoric aside, the authors ultimately relied on planning as the specific feature that differentiated a socialist society from capitalist society. Combined with the assertion that the law of value was as necessary under socialism as capitalism, the article clearly represented a significant challenge to Marx's theory of the capitalist mode of production.

Dunayevskaya's Response

Not surprisingly, Dunayevskaya followed her translation of the Soviet document with a brief assessment of what she viewed as a very significant revision to Marxism—the assertion that the law of value could and did operate in socialist society. At its very core, the document, according to Dunayevskaya's analysis, was proof of the capitalist nature of the Soviet Union. Moreover, she contended that the Russian revision was necessary so that official state theory would fall into line with state practice: "This startling reversal of Soviet political economy is neither adventitious nor merely conciliatory. That is the real significance of the article. It is a theoretical justification of social distinctions enshrined in the Soviet Constitution. ... The ideals and methodology of the article are not accidental. They are the ideas and methodology of an 'intelligentsia' concerned with the acquisition of 'surplus products.'"[16] Dunayevskaya completely rejected the notion that that law of value could operate in a non-exploitative, that is, socialist society. She argued that the "new twist" of determining distribution according to labour effectively translated into distribution according to value. Dunayevskaya further contended that Marx's formula, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," could only be understood as a repudiation of the law of value. In other words, socialist society could not be founded upon the alienation and exploitation of labour power and still claim to be socialist. To do so is merely to reinstitute class society.

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[15] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 521.

Rather than simply asserting the centrality of value to Marx's analysis of capitalist society, Dunayevskaya reviewed Marx's own critique of and revision to classical political economy. Noting that classical political economy had come to recognize labour as the source of value, it is Marx who further refined this understanding. Thus, by demonstrating that abstract labour, that is labour power, provided value and value provided the means of exchange, Marx was able to demonstrate the realization of surplus value as the defining feature of capitalist production. As she noted:

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[16] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 534.

> Marx called the labour process of capital the process of alienation. Abstract labour is *alienated labour*, labour estranged not merely from the product of its toil but also in regard to the very process of expenditure of its labour power. ... *In its Marxian interpretation, therefore, the law of value entails the concept of alienated labour or exploited labour and as a consequence, the concept of surplus value.*[17]

Ironically, Dunayevskaya noted that A. Leontiev, one of the editors of *Under the Banner of Marxism* and one of the authors of the article, articulated just such an understanding of the law of value in a 1935 article: " 'The Marxian doctrine of surplus value is based, as we have seen, on his teaching of value. That is why it is important to keep the teaching of value free from all distortions because the theory of exploitation is built on it.' "[18]

So, what of exploitation? This is precisely the problem, argued Dunayevskaya, that the new teaching regime must answer. How does exploitation become separated from the law of value? The answer she traced through the article involved what Dunayevskaya called an "elaborate theoretical justification". In essence, the Soviet essay asserted that socialism was irrevocably established in the USSR and "... then propounds certain 'laws of socialist society'. These are (1)the industrialization of the national economy, and (2) the collectivization of the nation's agriculture."[19] Although Dunayevskaya challenged the notion that these constituted "objective laws", the more important element of her argument stemmed from the observation that "objective necessity" drove the social structures of the USSR:

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[17] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 533, emphasis in original.
[18] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 533.

> The document fails to make any logical connection between the new basis, "socialism," and the law characteristic of capitalist production – the law of value. The implication that the state *is really "for"* the principle of paying labour according to needs, but is forced by objective necessity to pay according to value is precisely the core of Marxist theory of value. The supreme manifestation of the Marxian interpretation of the law of value is that labour power, exactly as any other commodity, is paid at value, or receives only that which is socially necessary for its reproduction.[20]

As a result of this theoretical revision, it was no surprise to Dunayevskaya that the educational advice offered by the Soviet authors was to alter the teaching of *Capital* so as to avoid the initial discussion of the nature of the commodity and its "value" under capitalism. Dunayevskaya directly challenged the assertion that Marx deviated from the "historical principle" so cherished by these Soviet authors. First noting that Marx utilized abstraction in order to reveal the "inner coherence," she argued that such a method as applied by Marx "... does not depart from the 'historic principle.' On the contrary, the theoretical development of the commodity is in reality the historical development of society from a stage when the commodity first makes its appearance…to its highest development, its 'classic form' as capitalism."[21] However, she noted, it is not loyalty to the historic principle that is really driving this proposed methodological revision; rather, it was driven by the need to justify Russia's post-war economy – defined as state capitalist by the Johnson Forest tendency. In other words, the Russian state had implemented a program of economic development that did not differ in any fundamental way from a capitalist state because value was still extracted from alienated labour. Moreover, the central role of the Russian state and the notion of "planning" did not alter this underlying "law" of the capitalist mode of production.

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[19] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 534.
[20] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 534.

The Academic Response

As one might anticipate, Dunayevskaya's translation and response brought the debate on the Russian Question that had primarily occurred among Marxists to a larger audience. Following the publication of the translated article and Dunayevskaya's commentary, the *American Economic Review* published three responses. While each of these commentaries will be touched upon in this section, one in particular stands out for detailed inclusion in this discussion – that submitted by Paul A. Baran (1910-1964). Baran was unique among the American academic Left not only for the quality and scope of his intellectual achievements, but also as one of the few (perhaps only) declared and tenured Marxist economists in the 1950s and early 1960s. Prior to arriving in the United States in 1939, Baran had studied in Moscow, Berlin and Frankfurt.[22] He was hired by Stanford University in 1948 and tenured in 1951.[23] Although Baran's career was cut short by heart failure at the age of 54, his name (forever conjoined to that of Paul Sweezy) stands for the development of Marxist economic theory and questions of "under-development". Baran's analysis of Marxian political economy remains to this day highly respected and studied.[24]

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[21] Dunayevskaya, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," p. 536.

By his own account, Baran's response to "Teaching Economics in the Soviet Union" resulted from the public sensation caused by the article:

> The ado is indeed extraordinary. A paper which under 'normal conditions' would become at best a matter of heated debates among outspoken members of the Marxian school commanded considerable space and editorial attention on the part of the *New York Times*, provoked comments by a number of professional economists in this country and elsewhere, and found publication in the *American Economic Review* which is not usually concerned with technical discussions among Marxian economists.[25]

Having listed the sources of fanfare about the article, Baran quickly stated his own assessment that "A conscientious appraisal of its contents reveals little which warrants such remarkable success."[26] Nevertheless, Baran examined the core arguments presented in the article and offered his own assessment as to whether the revision was a challenge to or affirmation of Marxism. Baran divided his analysis into five sections:

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[22] Christopher Phelps, "Introduction: A Socialist Magazine in the American Century," *Monthly Review: an Independent Socialist Magazine* 51, no. 1 (May99): p. 3.
[23] Phelps, p. 3.
[24] For example, see: John Bellamy Foster, "Monopoly Capital and the New Globalization.," *Monthly Review: an Independent Socialist Magazine* 53, no. 8 (Jan2002): pp. 1-16.
[25] Paul A. Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," *The American Economic Review* 34, no. 4 (1944): p. 862.
[26] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 862.

(1) Baran effectively supported the notion that teaching *Capital* cannot proceed according to the structure used by Marx. Moreover, he contended that students require familiarity with the workings of a capitalist economy – an experience he argued was not readily available to Russian students. Finally, Baran supported the new model as, he argued, it would provide a solid foundation in "abstract economic thinking and scientific method," quite apart from learning Marx. Thus, Baran found the "… propaedeuticial part of the article is thus so far plain sailing."[27]

(2) Baran noted that Leontiev et al. moved beyond a consideration of the formal arrangement of instruction to a consideration of "content errors" previously made in teaching economics in the USSR. Here they critiqued the "ultra leftism" that had conditioned Soviet teaching such that the "capitalist world" was seen merely as an "undifferentiated reactionary camp."[28] Such a view, noted Baran, made it nearly impossible for students to understand that the USSR continued to rely upon and interact with the capitalist West. In purging this "ultra-leftism" from Soviet economics, Baran concluded:

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[27] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 864.
[28] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 864.

> The authors of the article certainly stand here on orthodox ground. The surprise which this reminder of the fundamental propositions of Marxism has caused among some non-Russian writers can only be attributed to lack of understanding of the political theory of Bolshevism which sharpens one tool today and another tomorrow from its old ideological arsenal, depending on what the historical situation demands.[29]

(3) Having argued that "ultra-leftism" must be purged from the Soviet teaching in order to reconcile the Soviet economy with economic reality, Baran also advocated the termination of "ultra-leftism" from conception of daily Soviet life. Baran noted that if such misunderstandings were allowed to persist, students would fail to understand the composition of the Soviet economy domestically: "If the abolition of capitalism in Russia should be regarded as an immediate transition into the 'Millennium of Freedom,' how indeed should the Soviet reality (even before the devastation caused by war) be reconciled with such an image?"[30] Baran further enumerated the essential similarities between capitalism and socialism; such as, the defining feature of all economic activity is that it is conducted by "men" enacting control over nature, and that all economic systems face "objective limitations." For Baran, this "reduction in expectations was an important underlying goal of the Soviet article, as he noted: "Too many enthusiastic believers in the omnipotence of the Soviet

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[29] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 865.
[30] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 865.

government and of its centralized economic planning, intoxicated by the accomplishments of the successive Five Year Plans, seem to have regarded the sky to be the only limit to the possibilities of Russia's economic and social effort."[31]

(4) Baran did offer a caution in his final assessment. He argued that in their haste to prove the similarities between capitalism and socialism, the authors of the article risked losing sight of the key differences between the two systems. Baran did not suggest, though, that this was a deliberate act, but instead resulted from over-zealousness and "unfortunate terminology." This "unfortunate terminology," of course, comes into play on the question of the law of value. On this point, Baran argued that the law of value did not and could not operate in the USSR – a fact he says was tacitly acknowledged by the authors. To prove his point, Baran turned to Sweezy's definition of the law of value:

> The regularity observable in the functioning of the capitalist economy Marx has called the 'law of value'. In his lucid exposition of Marxian economics, Paul M. Sweezy explains very clearly the meaning of this term: '...what Marx called the 'law of value' summarizes those forces at work in a commodity producing society which regulate (a) the exchange rates among commodities, (b) the quantity of each produced, and (c) the allocation of the labour force to the various branches of production'.[32]

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[31] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 866.

[32] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 867. Sweezy completed this definition by concluding: "To use a modern expression, the law of

Clearly, in the Soviet case, argued Baran, the role of state planning in labour force assignment and state price-setting demonstrated that the law of value does not function in the USSR or under socialism, despite the authors' arguments to the contrary.

(5) Finally, given his analysis, as outlined above, Baran asked why the Soviet authors would have claimed the functioning of the law of value in socialist society? It is also here that he directly acknowledged Dunayevskaya's critique of the Soviet article. In keeping with his previous assertion that the authors employed "unfortunate terminology," Baran suggested that the "terminological muddle" stemmed from the notion of "law." Baran argued that the authors invoke the word "law" when referencing conditions which limit the social provisions that can be made under the current conditions of the Soviet economy—in this case, Baran noted that these are not "laws" but instances of limitation that will be overcome by communist

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value is essentially a theory of general equilibrium developed in the first instance with reference to simple commodity production and later on adapted to capitalism." Paul Marlor Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development; Principles of Marxian Political Economy* (New York : Modern Reader, 1968), p. 53. As esoteric as the "law of value" debate appears, how we understand it and its relationship to the functioning of capitalism on a global scale is particularly important. This question will be revisted in the final Chapter; however, what stands out at this point is that the key Marxian economists, Sweezy and Baran, who continue to influence Marxian scholarship, held a definition of the "law of value" that effectively equated it with the market function. This allowed both scholars to see "planning" under socialism as anathema to capitalism, perhaps a fatal flaw in their analyses.

> society.[33] The second group of phenomena to which the authors applied the term "law" was in the assertion of a "law of socialist development". But this "law", argued Baran, would also be better expressed by the authors as an economic necessity, suggesting that the route to greater industrialization and social well-being was to be achieved through industrialization policies such as those implemented in the successive Five Year Plans. It was on this point also that Baran found fault with the Soviet authors. In trying to justify state policy as "law" and arguing that the law of value in particular functions in Soviet society, Baran argued that the Soviet authors "[deprive] the 'law of value' of all its meaning and significance and ... [turn] it into a night in which all the cats are gray."[34]

Baran concluded his response to the article by noting that its importance resided in the authors' attempt to explain economic conditions in Russia; however, Baran questioned the attempt to "twist" and "bend" Marx's analysis of capitalism to analyze conditions in socialist Russia. Rather, he argued that the authors would have been better served had they availed themselves of the "technical innovations" offered by "modern economic science". Drawing from contemporary economics, argued Baran, would not have diminished the importance of Marx's analysis of capitalism nor reduced the comprehension of the "immense accomplishments" attained by the Soviet Union. In his final analysis, Baran concluded that the article opened some important "new vistas" in Soviet economic thinking and was a reassertion of Marxist orthodoxy rather than a revision:

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[33] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 869.
[34] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 869.

> It is not unlikely that, as the process of industrialization approaches a stage of certain maturity, and the coercion to save and to invest accordingly recedes, the preferences of the population as to the disposal of their income, the problems of consumers' choice, and the concomitant necessity to employ more refined and flexible methods of allocation of resources, may move to the center of interest of Russian economic science. There still is, however, a very long way to go. The article by Messrs. Leontiev et al is, if anything, not a departure from Marxian orthodoxy but rather its renewed, vigorous affirmation. To read anything else into it is wishful thinking. It is old wine and the bottles are not new either.[35]

Thus, in a few short pages, Baran argued that the article overall lacked theoretical and even historical significance. At best, then, there was an opportunity for new economic thinking to be practiced in the Soviet Union; however, this was not a conclusion to which Baran attached much hope. With little acknowledgement of Dunayevskaya's argument, Baran dismissed the importance and theoretical significance of the Soviet article.

In addition to the response offered by Baran, Oscar Lange and Leo Rogin also responded to the article.[36] The *American Economic Review*, as was its custom, published Dunayevskaya's rejoinder to all three economists. In her rejoinder, Dunayevskaya focused on the three very different responses to her claim that the Soviet "revision" to the law of value proved her position that the Soviet Union was state capitalist. As she recounted, each critique of her article flowed from a different assessment or understanding of Marx's theoretical contribution to political economy. Oscar Lange agreed with the Soviets, arguing that the law of value did apply to Soviet economics. However, Lange's assessment and analysis clearly equated the notion of the law of value with market exchange and pricing. Lange argued, "Marx's theory of value is not equivalent to his theory of exploitation."[37] He further argued that "[t]he adoption of the doctrine that the 'law of value' provides a basis for the management of the socialist economy was thus the result of the Soviet economists' need for a system of directives of welfare economics which would serve as a basis for economic planning. ... Rational use of resources requires definite principles of allocation; or, in other words, the use of a theory of value."[38] For Lange, this interpretation of the law of value, one which by his own reference was in part drawn from marginalist analysis, was in keeping with Marx and Marxist orthodoxy. One is hard pressed, however, to see the connection between the "rational use of resources" and the central role of the law of value in Marx's theory, in spite of Professor Lange's assertion.

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[35] Baran, "New Trends in Russian Economic Thinking?," p. 871.
[36] Both Lange and Rogin were well-established economists, though their works have not endured in the same way as Paul Baran's within Marxist literature.

Leo Rogin, on the other hand, did not focus his argument so much on the debate about the meaning and application of the law of value, but instead concentrated on the question of distribution raised by the Russian restatement of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* formula: "each according to need." It is apparent from his opening comments that Rogin saw his "defense" of the Soviets as a matter of historical necessity, as "... this is hardly the appropriate time for an adverse dogmatic judgment on a regime whose leaders have been vindicated, in an important sense, by the fact that they prepared their country, both morally and materially, for the supreme task of inaugurating the destruction of the world-wide menace of fascism."[39] Thus, implicit in Rogin's assessment of the Soviets was a strong commitment to view all decisions through the lens of preordained success. As a result, he turned his critique of Dunayevskaya's argument into a question of how the transitory state – that is, a state moving toward communism—should deal with questions of social distribution. Rogin rightly noted that when Marx proposed his famous statement in the *Critique*, he explicitly indicated that he was speaking of a higher stage communist state. To best consider Rogin's argument it is worth reflecting on the full quotation from Marx, which reads:

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[37] Lange, "Marxian Economics in the Soviet Union," *The American Economic Review* 35, no. 1 (1945): p. 129.
[38] Lange, "Marxian Economics in the Soviet Union," p. 131.

> In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its

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[39] Leo Rogin, "Marx and Engels on Distribution in a Socialist Society," *The American Economic Review* 35, no. 1 (1945): p. 138.

> entirety and society inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs![40]

Rogin drew on this and other citations from the *Critique* to make his argument that the current state of distribution according to labour – as outlined in "Teaching Economics" – was the inevitable social form as the new society emerges from the old. However, Rogin failed to also note that Marx's purpose in the essay was to critique the Gotha Programme which advocated, among other things, the "fair distribution" of the proceeds of labour. Marx chastised the program authors for repeating the error of bourgeois society which used the concept of "equal right" to ensure unequal outcomes. While Marx did indeed agree that unequal outcomes "... are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it has emerged from capitalist society,"[41] he did not argue that these errors or "defects" should be written into the Party's program. Moreover, he argued, "Quite apart from the analysis so far given, it was in general a mistake to make a fuss about so-called *distribution* and put the principal stress on it."[42] In other words, equitable distribution would follow from the termination of class society; however, attempts to address distribution as a separate consideration of what constituted class society would ultimately fail – a point that Dunayevskaya brings home frequently in her analyses of the Russian state.

Interestingly, having produced his "correction" to Dunayevskaya, Rogin did admit that there was an error implicit in "Teaching Economics... ." The error, from his perspective, was not the failure to recognize that Marx wrote of a transitory period in which distribution would be guided by notions of equal contribution that would lead to higher communist society. Instead, "The exposition in the [Soviet] article…is…at fault in seeming to pose a flat contradiction between distribution under a socialist society and under pure communism."[43] However, this was a fault of the authors, not the state, as Rogin further noted: "Even *at the beginning* in the Soviet Union, a strenuous effort has been made to provide for the 'social needs' of the population by means of the socialized branch of consumption."[44] In other words, the "error" lies only with the authors, who clearly have not adequately accounted for the considerable efforts undertaken by the Russian state to reduce disproportional distribution of social goods. Rogin concluded his essay with the argument that socialized production would ultimately alter the problems of distribution, although he did recognize potential problems: "If the situation (division of labour between manual labourers and a privileged few) be excessively prolonged, there is danger that the 'intelligentsia' may become constituted into a class or estate."[45] Yet, even having acknowledged this potentially damning error in the article, Rogin reserved his harshest words for the external critics of the USSR, again belying his ideological commitments: "Those on the contrary, who have a genuine interest in the welfare of the Russian masses and in the career of political and social democracy in Russia will try to promote… the allaying of ill informed hostility toward the Soviet regime."[46] Significantly, Rogin did not speak to the question of the law of value more theoretically. Moreover, his support and advocacy for the Soviet state and its endeavors, particularly in expanding public education, flies in the face of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which warned against state monopoly, particularly in "establishing" worker councils and state-base education. As Marx instructed: "Government and Church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school."[47]

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[40] *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 531.
[41] *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 531.
[42] *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 531.

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[43] Rogin, "Marx and Engels on Distribution in a Socialist Society," p. 140.
[44] Rogin, "Marx and Engels on Distribution in a Socialist Society,". 140. Significantly, Rogin highlighted how the turnover tax further safeguards "individual needs" by placing a higher tax, by per centage, on luxury items (Rogin, "Marx and Engels on Distribution in a Socialist Society," pp. 140-1). Notably, as previously discussed, Dunayevskaya's own analysis of the turn-over tax led her to the opposite conclusion, as we have previously noted.
[45] Rogin, "Marx and Engels on Distribution in a Socialist Society," p. 142.

From these brief overviews of the objections to Dunayevskaya's assessment of "Teaching Economics… " and the subsequent critical reflections about the content of the article itself, it is apparent that there was a wide schism of interpretation within and among Marxist economists. In her rejoinder[48], Dunayevskaya returned to a "… restatement of the law of value in its Marxian sense."[49] Tellingly, she noted: "Although these economists apparently agree that the article is not a revision but a reaffirmation of Marxism, they, nevertheless, reach different, even directly contradictory conclusions on the principal point of theory in the Soviet statement, namely that the law of value operates under 'socialism.'"[50] Again, Dunayevskaya resorted to a teaching model to demonstrate her argument (and Marx's by extension) that the law of value was the theory of surplus value and that this social relationship, arising from the mode of production, was the cornerstone of capitalist production. Drawing on the so-called fourth volume of *Capital*, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Dunayevskaya demonstrated that Marx's analysis was specific to capitalist production:

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[46] Rogin, "Marx and Engels on Distribution in a Socialist Society," p. 142.
[47] *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 540.
[48] I do not think it merely coincidental that these "respected" economists hardly even acknowledged Dunayevskaya's analysis; however, it would be speculative to suggest why they were inclined to be so dismissive of her work, though no critique was made of the quality of translation.
[49] Raya Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," *The American Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (1945): p. 660.

> Starting with the labour theory of value of Smith-Ricardo [Marx] showed that the unequal exchange between the capitalist and the worker was not a 'deviation' from the law, but its very basis. He transformed the classical labour theory of value into the theory of surplus value. Value, he wrote, was a social relation of production 'specifically capitalistic'. Marx's theory of value is his theory of surplus value.[51]

Notably, in his critique Lange suggested that one can not equate Marx's theory of value with exploitation; however, Dunayevskaya retorted, "By abstracting the exploitative content of the Marxian theory of value, Professor Lange has indeed deprived that theory of 'all meaning and significance'."[52] Dunayevskaya further challenged Lange's collapsing of notions of price, market, and value to again remind the reader that Marx explicitly recognized the deviation of price and value, and Marx "... maintained that the deviation of price from value is not an aberration of the *law* of value but only of its *manifestation*; no matter how individual prices deviate from value, the sum of all prices, according to Marx is equal to the sum of all values. The law of value remains dominant."[53] However, the greatest weakness Dunayevskaya identified in both Lange's and Rogin's very different responses to her article and translation was the underlying assumption that the Soviet Union was a socialist society. Both professors, then, sought to "bend and twist" Marx to fit the objective conditions of the masses in the emerging "new society". Clearly, Dunayevskaya did not share this optimistic evaluation of the emerging social formation in Russia.

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[50] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," p. 660.
[51] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," p. 661.
[52] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," p. 662.

Dunayevskaya reserved little space for a response to Baran. In a sense, they, at least agreed that the law of value is the operating basis of capitalism (a view explicitly denied by Lange, and similarly, if only implicitly, endorsed by Rogin). Dunayevskaya and Baran, however, differed significantly on the existence of classes in the USSR and on what Baran termed a "terminological muddle." Reasserting that Russia continued to be a class society, Dunayevskaya rejected Baran's claim to the contrary:

> Mr. Baran questions (pp. 869 – 70) my "gratuitous" assertion that classes exist in Russia since the material he has read point in the "opposite direction". He therefore assumes that I base my conclusions on the wide differentials in income. Income differentials in the USSR are not sublimated from all exploitative vices; they too are only a manifestation of the actual production relations.[54]

Dunayevskaya provided a list of suitable references supporting her argument that classes existed in the USSR; however, the real point of dispute between Baran and Dunayevskaya was that of theoretical terminology:

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[53] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," p. 662.
[54] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," p. 663.

> [Baran] avers that the Soviet economists' acceptance of the law of value under "socialism" is merely the result of a "terminological muddle" surrounding the notion of "law". The Russians, however, are not muddleheads. They have deliberately accepted the validity of the law of value for the Soviet Union because in the economic categories used by Marx in *Capital* they have found the theoretical reflection of economic reality.[55]

Ultimately, Dunayevskaya contended that Baran's contradictory position, that is the fact that he argued the law of value only functions under capitalism but supported the revised teaching structure of *Capital*, left him with an unsolvable dilemma: "It is not merely a question of supplying factual information [on] teaching the structure of *Capital* – Volume I, the most abstract volume of *Capital*, is full of historical and statistical data. It is a question of severing the indissoluble connection between the dialectical method of Marx and his political economy."[56] In other words, Dunayevskaya argued that Marx's decision to begin *Capital* with a discussion of the commodity was the product of his use of dialectics (that is, the simple form). In order to teach the logical development of the capitalist mode of production requires that the student be familiar with "commodity".

Conclusion

This Chapter began by noting that answering the Russian Question was not merely a preoccupation of the Left in the United States and elsewhere, but was of key theoretical and practical importance in the development of Marxist theory in "post-revolutionary" societies. A clear analysis of Russia in the Stalinist period was also cause of significant division among various parties and organizations world-wide. For many it was difficult to let go of the hope and belief that the "revolution" had been realized in Russia and that the Soviets were instituting a new society that would act as vanguard for the revolutionary masses around the globe. Dunayevskaya and the Johnson Forest tendency challenged this hopeful outlook and critiqued those who held to a defensive position of the Russian state. It is also within this context that the Chapter specifically reviewed Dunayevskaya's effort to demonstrate the theoretical machinations of the Russians to justify what she viewed as the capitalist counter-revolution in Russia. The publication of Soviet economic theory in the *American Economic Review* represents an important instance of expanding the audience debating the Russian Question and engaging the scholarly community directly. For this reason, among others, the Chapter argued that it was valuable to focus on one essay and the commentaries and responses that it elicited. From a theoretical perspective, it was also an opportunity to examine Dunayevskaya's defense of her own theoretical analysis when pushed by renowned economists of the time and to see the centrality of value theory to her conception of state capitalism.

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[55] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder," p. 664.
[56] Dunayevskaya, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism? A Rejoinder,", p. 664.

In the final analysis, Dunayevskaya's assessment of the revision to Marxist value theory, as outlined by the Soviet authors, supported her broader contention that the Soviet Union was state capitalist. More specifically, her focus on the theoretical propositions being employed in Russia provided a further theoretical support to her empirical studies of the Russian economy. Challengers to her conclusions, such as Baran, Rogin and Lange, often based their assessments on the underlying assumption that the USSR was a socialist society; moreover, they viewed the USSR as historically unique and therefore likely to produce social structures not foreseen by Marx. Further, as the "red scare" would overwhelm American politics (and, as the Communist Party had previously been illegal in the United States), it is not surprising that the intellectual left would attempt to write ideological defenses of the USSR. Trotsky's own defense of the "workers' state" demonstrated the unwillingness to let go of the revolutionary vision that had successfully attached itself to the events of 1917. Arguably, however, the almost blind support lent to the Soviet regime ultimately did little for Soviet workers and impeded the critical theoretical work necessary for conceiving and building the "new society." In this regard alone, the work and legacy of the Johnson Forest tendency in general, and the work of Dunayevskaya in particular, serve to preserve critical scholarship within a Marxist rubric. Moreover, given the luxury of hindsight and the recent "deconstruction" of the USSR, we are today able to see first-hand the accuracy of the reasoning behind Dunayevskaya's analysis.

Before proceeding to an enlarged discussion of Dunayevskaya's key insights with regard to Marx's humanism, implicitly developed over the course of her 1940s essays, consideration of another aspect of Dunayevskaya's theorizing must first be taken up. In addition to studying what Dunayevskaya refers to as "Marxist fundamentals," she also engaged questions around the revolutionary potential of other groups whose primary identity did not easily equate to the working class. For our purposes here, the 1940s opened the space for consideration of what was often referred to as the "Negro Question." The question of the revolutionary subject is one that is revisited throughout Dunayevskaya's later writings, particularly with regard to women and youth; however, her early work with Black organizations and engagement with the emerging civil rights movement in the United States (and Third World liberation movements in the 1960s) brought consideration of the revolutionary potential of different subjectivities (other than the worker) to her writings. It is to her initial consideration of the "Negro Question" that we now turn.

Chapter Five

Revolutionary Subjectivities and the Negro Question

Introduction

The preceding Chapters have, for the most part, been concerned with the Russian Question and assessing the nature of the mode of production of post-revolutionary, Stalinist Russia. Previous discussions of Dunayevskaya's theoretical work have focused on her understanding of the core component of the capitalist mode of production which can be cast under the general title "the law of value". However, what emerges from these "economic" writings about value is that Marx's primary contribution to modern political economy is the development of the notion of surplus value – that is, the mechanism which not only renders labour power a commodity but ensures that workers under the capitalist mode of production are alienated from the conditions of their labour. When value is considered in this light, it is apparent that Marx's primary concerns are not "economic" in the sense that we would understand it today, but are social and, to borrow from Lenin's phrase, "to a man" concerned with the concrete material circumstances under which individuals "labour". As noted in previous chapters, Dunayevskaya's reading of Marx was absolutely agent-centered.

This Chapter takes up Dunayevskaya's early treatments of revolutionary subjectivity (that is, *who* is the revolutionary agent) linked to Black movements in the United States. Dunayevskaya approached the question of Black consciousness as revolutionary consciousness in a manner that challenged notions of American chauvinism[1] and (what amounted to) the privileging of the white proletariat. For Dunayevskaya, the "Negro Question", as it was cast in the Workers Party, needed to be approached from within Lenin's and Trotsky's analysis of the "National Question" and the right of nations to self-determine the nature of their political existence. In order to gain a sense of Dunayevskaya's radical thinking in regard to the Negro question, four of her essays written between 1944 and 1946 will be considered here. As well, the Chapter undertakes an explanation of the National Question as formulated by Lenin and Trotsky in order to explicate the framework being drawn on by Dunayevskaya.

The National Question

Organizationally, it could not be assumed that a unity would exist between white and black workers in segregated America. As with other theoretical and practical organizational discussions affecting the structure of a Marxist movement, these problems were stated as "questions" – hence the debate around such topics as the "National Question" or "the Russian Question" or "the Woman Question," and particularly in the United States, the "Negro Question." Given Dunayevskaya's early experience of living in the Black ghetto of Detroit and her involvement in civil rights and Black organizations, it is not surprising that she also turned her philosophical and organizational mind to the question of Black masses and the revolution.[2]

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[1] Trotsky, among others, used the term chauvinistic to define the sense of American exceptionalism that permeated the Left in the United States and left little room for consideration of the relationship between different mass movements.

As noted previously, 1940 marked the departure of Max Shachtman from the Socialist Workers Party to form the Workers Party. Dunayevskaya followed Shachtman, although this alliance would also terminate by 1947. The Workers Party differed in its interpretation of the "Russian Question" from the Socialist Workers Party. Prior to the split from the Socialist Workers Party, however, serious consideration of the role of Blacks in the revolutionary struggle within the US movement had been raised among Trotskyists and by Trotsky himself. The Socialist Workers Party, at its July 1939 Convention, had adopted two resolutions: "The Socialist Workers Party and Negro Work" and "The Right of Self-Determination and the Negro in the United States of North America" which generally supported an undefined Black self-determination in the United States.[3] CLR James had penned the second resolution, which concluded:

> Negro members of the Fourth International, however, have every right to participate in the formation of the ideology of their own race, with such slogans and propaganda as correspond to the political development and revolutionary awakening of the great masses of the Negro people; and, while conscious of the ultimate aims of socialism, must recognize the progressive and revolutionary character of

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[2] Of course, this interest and involvement also provided some of the foundation for the collaborative relationship with CLR James, who had already published *Black Jacobins* in 1938. See: C. L. R James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2d ed., rev ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

[3] Leon Trotsky, and George Breitman, *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1967), pp. 49, 53.

> any demand unfolding among great masses of Negroes for a Negro state, and if necessary vigorously advocate it.[4]

In his overview of Trotsky's position on Black Nationalism, Breitman concluded:

> If not completely identical, the views of Trotsky and the Socialist Workers Party were now similar. The resolutions adopted at the Socialist Workers Party's 1939 Convention, the most advanced application of Marxism to race relations that any American party had made, stimulated and prepared the Socialist Workers Party to play a leading role in the struggles against racism during and after World War II. They also laid the groundwork for the Socialist Workers Party to present the only consistent revolutionary attitude to black nationalism when that tendency began to assume mass proportions in the 1960s.[5]

Not sharing Breitman's positive assessment of the Socialist Workers Party in regard to Black struggles, CLR James argued in 1943 that "The Trotskyist movement from its foundation in 1928 to 1938 took even less interest in the Negro question than the Communist Party and once more it was only under the insistence of the international organization that the American Marxist movement took action on the Negro question."[6] In fact, prior to leaving the Socialist Workers Party, CLR James traveled to Coyoacan, Mexico to discuss the "Negro Problem" with Trotsky. Transcripts of these discussions were subsequently distributed among members of the Socialist Workers Party and later the Workers Party. During her time with Trotsky, Dunayevskaya also noted that Trotsky's files were "full" of correspondence on the "Negro Question"; however, this correspondence only served to convince Trotsky of the overwhelmingly short-sighted chauvinism to be found among the American Left.

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[4] C. L. R. James. "The Right of Self-Determination and the Negro in the United States of North Americas." Web page, July 1939 [accessed 17 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/arch[illegible]j[illegible]es-clr/works/1939/07/self-determination.htm.

[5] Trotsky and Breitman, p. 57.

[6] C. L. R. James. "The Historical Development of the Negro in the United States." Web page, 1943 [accessed 6 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/james/james01.htm, p. 10 of 21, fulltext version.

In his contribution on "Negro Question", an essay entitled "The Historical Development of the Negro in the United States," James articulated a program for the development of a Workers Party position on this question. His "Program of Action" called for a series of informed studies and discussions on key topics relating to Negroes and the history of the United States. Interestingly, this same program of action was proposed by James to Trotsky in their 1939 meeting. Beyond historical studies, James also advocated the organization of a "... special Negro department to deal with the general work among Negroes" and the creation of a "... special column in the newspaper on the Negro question and should invite the participation of non-party sympathizers in its theoretical work."[7] However, when making a similar proposal to Trotsky, James argued that theoretical discussions of socialism should not appear in newspapers targeted toward Black workers; it was, perhaps, an early foreshadowing of an issue that would play a significant part in the break between Dunayevskaya and CLR James in the 1950s.[8]

Regardless of future theoretical differences the Johnson Forest tendency answered CLR James' call to engage in both historical study and philosophical debates through contributions to *The New International* and Party *Bulletins*.

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[7] *Sic*, James. "The Historical Development of the Negro in the United States." Web page, 1943 [accessed 6 July 2006], p. 21 of 21, fulltext version.
[8] Trotsky and Breitman, p. 42.

Consideration of the "Negro Problem" enjoyed a certain legitimacy among the American Left simply because Lenin and Trotsky, among others, had identified the American Negro as an oppressed national group. For Bolshevism generally, the revolutionary role and place of American Blacks came to be subsumed under considerations of the right to self-determination and the "National Question". It is thus within the wider debate that Dunayevskaya offered her own essays and defense of the minority position in the Workers Party. It is to the specifics of these contributions that we now turn our attention.

Dunayevskaya's Contribution to the "Negro Question"

Dunayevskaya initiated her formal engagement with the "Negro Question" in a discussion essay dated June 18, 1944.[9] Although archival documents do not indicate how broadly the document was circulated, it is likely that it was at the least shared among members of the Johnson Forest tendency. The essay was entitled "Marxism and the Negro Problem" and was intended to link the nature of Black struggles in America to Lenin's discussion of the National Question (an opinion and theoretical orientation shared by Trotsky). Before reviewing Dunayevskaya's own approach to the Negro question as a national question, it is valuable to briefly review Lenin's key contributions to these debates in order to highlight the continuity of the argument being stressed by Dunayevskaya.

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[9] Archive #259-270.

Lenin's Contributions to the "National Question"

Lenin's writings leading up to the October Revolution reveal an engagement with questions around the nature of nations and the recognition of their right to self-determination. Tsarist Russia had extended Russian control over a vast array of peoples who laid claim to national independence with the realization of the overthrow of the Tsar. However, these demands posed problems for the Bolshevik leadership on very practical grounds. The intention and orientation of the Revolution was to transcend national chauvinisms, and ultimately to build an international revolutionary movement among workers. The notion of independence for nations like Poland, for example, appeared to be driven by bourgeois interests; but, the bourgeoisie were able to attract the support of the peasants and workers through nationalist slogans. As Lenin so eloquently wrote in 1913:

> Social-Democracy, therefore, must give the most emphatic warning to the proletariat and the working people of all nationalities against direct deception by the nationalistic slogans of their own bourgeoisie, who with their saccharine or fiery speeches about 'our native land' try to *divide* the proletariat and *divert its attention* from their bourgeois intrigues while they enter into an economic and political alliance with the bourgeoisie of other nations and with the tsarist monarchy.[10]

From this exhortation, one may be tempted to conclude that Lenin would be opposed to the realization of national self-determination; but that would over-simplify this argument. Rather than assert solidarity over national aspiration, Lenin argued that a Marxist analysis must always be rooted in concrete historical circumstances. And, such "rootedness" must lead to a concrete definition of the "National Question".[11] Turning directly to Marx's analysis of the "National Question", Lenin noted: "Marx questions a socialist belonging to an oppressor nation about his attitude to the oppressed nation and at once reveals a defect *common* to the socialists of dominant nations (the English and the Russians): failure to understand their socialist duties towards the downtrodden nations, their echoing of the prejudices acquired from the bourgeoisie of the 'dominant nations'."[12] Lenin goes on to argue:

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[10] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), p. 245.

> The conclusion that follows from all these critical remarks of Marx's [on supporting national movements] is clear: the working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question, since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken *all* nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to *nationalistic* prejudices, that is, recognizing 'one's own nation' as a model nation (or we would add, one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state).[13]

Given this analysis, Lenin's approach to national independence movements was inclined towards support, particularly for those "progressive elements" within nationalist movements that would by their presence and

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V. I. Lenin. "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination." Web page, April-June 1914 [accessed 6 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/index.htm, p. 2 of 5, fulltext.

[12] V. I. Lenin. "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination." Web page, April-June 1914 [accessed 6 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/index.htm, chapter 8, fulltext, p. 1 of 7.

[13] V. I. Lenin. "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination." Web page, April-June 1914 [accessed 6 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/index.htm.chapter 8, fulltext, p. 3 of 7.

existence offer revolutionary alternatives. In practical terms, Lenin argued that self-determination could only be meaningful if it was attached to the formation of a state; in particular, Lenin rejected notions of "cultural autonomy" as a mechanism for ensuring bourgeois control of the state and thwarting the realization of social democracy.[14] Particularly salient for Lenin, and reflected in the programs he supported, was a distinction between oppressor and oppressed nation. In his 1921 "Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions,"[15] Lenin drew on this distinction to argue that the Communist International's praxis should be rooted in concrete, "on the ground" realities. As Lenin argued:

> We [the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions] have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist Parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the "bourgeois-democratic" movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships. ... The significance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organizing in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited.[16]

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[14] Lenin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 19 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), p. 246.

[15] Lenin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), pp. 213 – 63.

[16] Lenin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), p. 243.

One may be tempted to conclude that it made perfect sense, from Lenin's argument, to support colonized movements for independence; however, extending such an analysis to Black populations in the United States may appear a bit of a stretch. Yet, both Lenin and Trotsky singled out "Negroes in America" as an exemplar of national oppression.[17] As Trotsky noted: "For [Lenin] a war of national liberation, in contrast to wars of imperialist oppression, was merely another form of national revolution which in its turn enters a necessary link in the liberating struggle of the international working class."[18] In other words, one could view these national aspirations, even if influenced by bourgeois ideas, as an important element in realizing revolutionary change. Trotsky concluded that "…the national policy of Lenin will find its place among the eternal treasures of mankind."[19]

Conjoining the "Negro Question" and the "National Question"

Returning, then, to Dunayevskaya's 1944 discussion essay, she argued that Trotsky's and Lenin's treatment of the "Negro Question" as an element of the "National Question" was a recognition of the mass revolutionary potential of Blacks within American society. Moreover, because of the unique historical circumstances that constituted a Black consciousness within American society, these aspirations could not simply be subsumed within broader proletariat struggles: "It is the Negro's special oppression, the deprivation of his political rights, the discrimination against him on the job, Jim Crowism and racial segregation that makes of him a problem. The attempt to gloss over this fact or subordinate it to the general labour problem Trotsky considered a manifestation of, or concession to American chauvinism."[20] And, "[t]hey cannot be told to wait for the day after the revolution."[21] Thus, Dunayevskaya drew on Trotsky and Lenin not as "voices of authority" – as she was subsequently accused of doing in the debate with Coolidge[22] – but as examples of the application of Marx's method of analysis to arrive at a historically concrete view of national oppression and the different ways in which revolutionary subjectivity may be formed and called upon given particular historical experiences and circumstances.

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[17] See: Lenin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 31 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), vol. 31, pp. 144 – 151; Leon Trotsky. "The History of the Russian Revolution — Ch. 39." Web page, 1932 [accessed 16 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1930-hrr/ch39.htm.

[18] Trotsky. "The History of the Russian Revolution — Ch. 39." Web page, 1932 [accessed 16 July 2006], fulltext, p. 4 of 19.

[19] Trotsky. "The History of the Russian Revolution — Ch. 39." Web page, 1932 [accessed 16 July 2006], fulltext, p. 19 of 19.

Dunayevskaya closed this article by conducting a materialist analysis of the relationship between the transition from slavery to wage employment and the formation of Black identity and consciousness in the United States. Based on this analysis she argued that the experience of slavery constituted an identity among Blacks that was further consolidated under industrial capitalism:

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[20] Archive #261.

[21] Archive #262.

[22] Coolidge closed his response to Dunayevskaya's polemic against the Majority position with the following: "No discussion can be carried on fruitfully or sensibly, as a battle of quotations, no matter what the source of the quotations. Lenin and Trotsky are our teachers, but we dishonour them and ourselves by burnin incense in their names. Marxism is not a faith once and for all delivered to the saints. Our doctrine and theory were not delivered to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky on tales of stone as they communed with some Jehova on Sinai." David Coolidge [pseudonym of Ernest Rice McKinney], "Negroes and the Labor Movement: An Answer to F. Forrest," *The New International* 12, no. 3 (1946): p. 92.

> The Negro being at the very bottom of the social structure, capitalist society pushes him into the worst paid industries. But for that very reason, as the capitalist economy develops, these industries become more and more important. Thus, from the very fact of what he is in capitalist society, from the very fact of his national oppression, the Negro becomes one of the forces for the overthrow of capitalism. The Negro proletariat has been very strategically placed in industry. ...The contradiction between the potency in the process of production and his seeming impotence outside cannot but find a manner of expression.[23]

Dunayevskaya's analysis, in a very sophisticated way, understood that race had a role to play in social structures and in the construction of a social identity that drew from an individual's experience of their own subjectivity in relation to other social structures (in this case, the capitalist mode of production). The effect, particularly in the case of US capitalism, was that the experience of oppression organized Blacks in disproportionate numbers in heavy industry. And, in a mode of production dominated by "production for the sake of production", the revolutionary potential of a racially defined segment of the proletariat, argued Dunayevskaya, was significant.

In order to address the revolutionary potential of Blacks, Dunayevskaya's published essays examine the historical context of the "Negro Question" in the United States. Dunayevskaya acknowledged the need for academic study with regard to Black political history in order to understand the development of Black subjectivity in the United States. With this in mind, her first published essay on the "Negro Question" appeared in *The New International* in November 1944 entitled "Negro Intellectuals in Dilemma: Myrdal's Study of a Crucial Problem" was a review of Gunnar Myrdal's two volume study: *The American Dilemma: the Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, published in 1944.[24] Although generally supportive of the need for the type of study undertaken by Myrdal, she found significant elements of Black political organization were overlooked or ignored in Myrdal's study. Although she again acknowledged that more academic work needed to be done to address the "Negro Question" both historically and theoretically, she could not help but note that Myrdal's failures ultimately presented a skewed picture of Black organization and radicalism in America.

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[23] Archive #267-268, underlining in original.

To make her case, Dunayevskaya cited four distinct failures in Myrdal's study. First, Dunayevskaya identified the study as a retrogression as it failed to record the class alliance that emerged between White and Black farmers in the southern populist movement or to discuss the National Coloured Farmers' Alliance (and its membership of 1.25 million farmers) – an alliance that Dunayevskaya assessed as an "outstanding example of class solidarity across racial lines."[25] And why did this movement go unmentioned and unrecorded in such a vast historical document? The answer, Dunayevskaya argued, related to Myrdal's second failure. Dunayevskaya contended that Myrdal simply did not consider this type of class organization as having political importance: "Mr.

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[24] Archive #271-274.
[25] Archive #271.

Myrdal neither searched this field nor even indicated that it should be searched because his outlook could not encompass the possibility of such a movement. Myrdal emphatically rejects the Marxian concept of the class struggle."[26] Notably, Dunayevskaya argued that class and race both form a salient category (or subjectivity) for a meaningful inquiry into Black organization. Rather than treating these subjectivities as opposites or even contradictions, Dunayevskaya argued that both came together in unique organizational ways for Black mass movements. Although the argument was not fully developed in this article, it is apparent that Dunayevskaya's analysis had already moved significantly beyond the Left debate on the relationship between race and class.[27]

The third failure was the lack of recognition of what Dunayevskaya termed the "economic factor". As she noted: "To [Myrdal] the Negro problem is a moral problem arising out of the conflict between the 'American Creed' that all men are created equal, and the American reality, in which the Negro is so unjustly treated."[28] For Dunayevskaya, however, the "Negro Problem" most certainly rested on a "solid economic foundation"; and, in spite of Myrdal's dismissal of class struggle, Dunayevskaya found room to praise the section on labour. Yet, this praise was for the collection of empirical data rather than the conclusions or insights derived from the data by Myrdal. The result was that Myrdal was able to assemble the relevant data, but was ultimately unable to understand the material conditions of Black oppression in the United States.

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[26] Archive #272.
[27] It is not my intention to suggest that this debate has been definitively answered; however, what is attractive about Dunayevskaya's analysis is that it is not necessary for one subjectivity to "trump" another. In other words, race can serve as the basis for revolutionary organization just as class – and, importantly, these social categories interact and affect each other in a variety of ways.
[28] Archive #272.

Finally, Dunayevskaya critiqued the study for overlooking what she termed "the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of the Negro in the United States… " – that is, the Garvey movement.[29] This will not be the last time that Dunayevskaya drew attention to the Garvey movement; for her purposes in this review essay, it was important to address the Garvey movement because it represented the beginnings of a racial consciousness that was significance for future developments in American politics among Black Americans. And, perhaps more importantly, for Dunayevskaya, the Garvey movement represented a nascent national consciousness among Blacks – drawing her analysis back to Lenin's theses on the "National Question." In this essay, however, she merely raised the concern that Myrdal neglected to analyze the movement in any significant way: "Mr. Myrdal himself does not analyze the Garvey movement, although he states that this, along with a thorough study of the movement, ought to be done… . Why Mr. Myrdal has not done so in a study lasting four years and covering 1400 pages of text remains inexplicable."[30] The combination of these four failures on Myrdal's part for Dunayevskaya meant that the study, at best, only furnished empirical data with little substance or meaningful analysis. Myrdal, ultimately, could not "solve" the Negro problem.

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[29] Archive #274. The Garvey Movement was born in the United States under the leadership of Marcus Garvey. Garvey formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association (first established in Jamaica) and was associated with the "back to Africa" movement of the 1920s. For a brief overview of Garvey and Garveyism, see: "The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Project, UCLA." Web page, [accessed 17 July 2006]. Available at http://www.isop.ucla.edu/africa/mgpp/. Dunayevskaya would continue to reflect on the importance of Garvey: "The Garvey movement was the greatest movement America had ever seen in mass numbers. Garvey organized some six million people" (Dunayevskaya, Hudis, and Anderson, p. 149).

Dunayevskaya had some significant differences and concerns with Myrdal's assessment of the "Negro Problem" in the American context. However, she articulated a very good reason for engaging such an academic work, which she outlined at the close of her article. Understanding Black movements such as the Garveyists, combined with an empirical analysis of a proletarianized Black labour force, were, for Dunayevskaya "... portents on the horizon which can be ignored only at the peril of the labour movement."[31] These "portents" were powerful signs of an emerging social group with revolutionary potential that would have to be addressed by socialists: "... they [Negro organizations] must be approached upon the indispensable basis of the revolutionary struggle for socialism and of the proletariat as that social class which will solve the Negro problem along with all other major problems that capitalist society cannot solve."[32] For Dunayevskaya, this conclusion made it imperative that the Workers Party work out a position on the Negro Question and a strategy to work with Black organizations.

Within the Workers Party, the debate over the "Negro Question" began to heat up in 1945. In January of that year, *The New International* published the complete text of two resolutions concerning the relationship between the Workers Party and Negro organizations. One resolution was put forward by the National Committee and was seen to represent the majority position within the Workers Party. The second resolution was put forward by CLR James (under the pseudonym JR Johnson) as a minority position. *The New International* subsequently published articles in support of each position. In May 1945, Dunayevskaya's defense of CLR James' resolution – or perhaps more accurately, her critique of the National Committee resolution – was published.[33] Building on her earlier analysis of the works of Lenin and Trotsky on the "Negro Question", Dunayevskaya specifically took up the nature of socialist support for mass (or independent) Black movements. Dunayevskaya's article was a direct response to McKinney's arguments in support of the majority position.[34]

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[30] Archive #274.
[31] Archive #274.
[32] Archive #274.

From the title of Dunayevskaya's response, the differences between her views and those expressed by the National Committee are quite apparent. While McKinney's article and resolution was entitled "Negroes **and** the Revolution," Dunayevskaya's polemic was entitled "Negroes **in** the Revolution". In this article she specifically asked (and answered) what should be the relationship between independent struggles of minority and revolutionary parties. She began the article by reminding readers that this is a question that was not historically unique and was one that Lenin had best encapsulated under the National Question, quoting

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[33] Archive #282-285.

[34] Ernest Rice McKinney is remembered as one of the more prominent Black Trotskyists in the 1940s and is recalled as one of CLR James intellectual opponents in the movement.

Lenin she noted: " 'The dialectics of history is such that small nations powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the bacilli, which help the *real* power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely the *socialist* proletariat.' "[35] In other words, struggles for independence ultimately strike at the heart of entrenched power relations – even if the movement was not constructed or organized solely for this purpose. McKinney adhered to a more "orthodox" approach:

> The strategy and tactics of the revolutionists must be to liquidate the ideological influence of the present Negro and white leadership of the Negro masses and to replace this leadership with a militant leadership at least moving in the direction of class consciousness. Concretely, this could only be a leadership supplied from the trade unions or the Workers Party.[36]

Given this statement, it is obvious that McKinney, and the majority of the National Committee of the Workers Party were prepared to privilege the trade unions and the Workers Party as **the** revolutionary organizations. This was not to say that Blacks were not envisioned as an important element of these groups, but rather to suggest that the majority argument relied on class as the most salient organizational force when building a revolutionary movement. Again, as she so often did, Dunayevskaya stepped back from this argument and forced a reexamination of why it is that the Workers Party supported trade unions in the first place – as the same argument could be made in favour of supporting independent struggles.

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[35] Archive #283.
[36] Archive #283.

> We [the Workers Party] support the trade union struggle for immediate demands because, due to the workers' role in the process of production, this struggle leads them to a struggle against capitalism, despite the class-collaborationist program of their leadership. Likewise, the logic of the Negro struggle for immediate democratic rights will lead them to a struggle against capital and the state.[37]

Dunayevskaya's argument went to the heart of the relationship between party, mass organizations and what constituted a revolutionary subject in historical context.

Moreover, what is remarkable about this analysis was that Dunayevskaya kept the struggle against capitalism (the truly revolutionary goal) at the centre of her assessment of the need to support Negro mass mobilizations. Conversely, McKinney made a similar claim, but in terms of organizational practice he fell victim to the same chauvinism that Trotsky identified as a "character flaw" of the American Left in 1930. In fact, McKinney advocated the instigation of a rupture among Negro leadership in order to establish the dominance of the proletariat. McKinney's argument was that such a rupture could be achieved by infiltrating Negro organizations with Party loyalists. Dunayevskaya's response is telling:

> The *first* step ought to be *to fight*. If the first step is not to fight, but to create a class rupture in these [Negro] organizations, does or does not such a statement mean a declaration of war against these organizations? This is not a theoretical question, but one concerning practical action. ... If the *first* step in entering the organizations that fight for democratic rights of the Negro people is the creating of a class rupture between the proletarian Negroes and the 'leader clique', then, of necessity the party in actuality is

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[37] Archive #283.

> demanding that these organizations accept our program as a *condition* for our support.[38]

From Dunayevskaya's perspective, the Workers Party was missing out on a historic opportunity to offer support to independently organized Blacks whose mobilization was not specifically tied to trade union activity. It is important to note, however, that her position was not taken at the expense of the revolutionary role of the proletariat. In fact, at this juncture we see Dunayevskaya working out a complex notion of revolutionary subjectivity – one that is not divorced from production, but neither is it entirely reliant on class subjectivity. Oppression – though ultimately rooted in the nature of established production relations—can be exercised or enhanced by other criteria such as race. The manifestation of this oppression was apparent by the place Negro populations held in the process of American (Northern) industrial expansion, but such oppression also called forth democratic demands as Black populations organized around demands for an inclusive democratic civil society. Dunayevskaya summarized this position at the close of her article:

> Merely to say that labour will "fix" it all is to say nothing. Labour has to "fix" all problems. The proletariat is the only cohesive revolutionary class in present-day society and no fundamental transformation of the social order can occur except under its leadership. But meanwhile the Negroes are in constant activity and organization (NAACP, Urban League, Garvey movement, [March on Washington movement]) on the basis of fact that they are a nationally oppressed minority. ... [it is not] even merely a question of grudging support of these democratic struggles, but of support and development of a powerful force, which when it fights, as it must, leads inevitably to clash with the

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[38] Archive #284.

> bourgeoisie and thereby makes it a part of the struggle for socialism.[39]

As one would anticipate, McKinney reacted strongly to Dunayevskaya's polemic against the Majority Resolution.[40] McKinney's first line of attack was to suggest that Dunayevskaya had misquoted his article: "It is permissible to disagree as violently as one wishes with a position but one must be careful to quote in such a way as not to confuse and mislead the reader… . Context has no meaning for Forest [Dunayevskaya]."[41] McKinney contested Dunayevskaya's reliance on Lenin and Trotsky as authoritative figures on the Negro Question, and, instead chose to focus on Lenin's vanguardism: "Probably the greatest single contribution of Lenin to Marxist theory and practice was his conception that the working class must be organized and led by a certain kind of party, that the party is primary and that without the party organized and disciplined for the conquest of the masses, there can be no solution to the problem of the masses."[42] Regardless of McKinney's assertion of misquotation, his version of "the party to lead" clearly ran contrary to the argument being made by Dunayevskaya. Although never directly stated by Dunayevskaya or McKinney, it is apparent that the real basis of their disagreement was not a question of the "correct" reading of Lenin or Trotsky, but resided in the way that Dunayevskaya approached the development of revolutionary subjects, what she termed here "independent mass movements," that is, groups or masses that were outside of the control of trade unions or the party. In other words, revolutionary outcomes, she argued, were realizable through agents that drew on other notions of identity; for example, race, gender, or age. Thus, the "Negro Question" was about the identification of and support for movements and people who did not necessarily subscribe to socialism; nor, were they Party members.

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[39] Archive #285.

[40] Interestingly, because it speaks to a coming break with CLR James, McKinney's response to Dunayevskaya is available on-line at the CLR Institute website; however, Dunayevskaya's article does not appear – though it was written in defense of CLR James' minority resolution.

[41] Coolidge, "Negroes and the Labor Movement: An Answer to F. Forrest," p. 90.

[42] Coolidge, "Negroes and the Labor Movement: An Answer to F. Forrest," p. 91.

This published exchange between Dunayevskaya and McKinney was not the last word on the "Negro Question" among members of the Workers Party. Dunayevskaya continued her 1944 essay on "Marxism and the Negro Question" in April 1946 via the Workers Party's *Bulletin*. In this essay she spoke directly to the use of a national independence framework for conceptualizing the "Negro Problem." This essay is a particularly clear example of Dunayevskaya's application of Lenin and Trotsky to the social condition of Blacks in America. It is useful to trace out two key elements of her argument in this regard with an eye to fully explicating Dunayevskaya's notion of revolutionary subjectivity.[43] First, she reminded the reader of Trotsky's conceptualization of the "National Question": " 'Nations grow out of the racial material under definite conditions… we do not obligate the Negroes to become a nation; if they are, then, that is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for… . In any case, suppression of the Negroes pushes them toward a political and national unity.'"[44] Dunayevskaya further distinguished Trotsky's and her own opinion from that argued by the Majority in the Workers Party: "Comrade [McKinney] ... asks me whether I consider the Negroes to be a nation. No, I do not, but that is not the question. The issue at stake is the principle by which Lenin clearly demarcated the national question from the general class struggle and the question of the proletarian revolution."[45] In other words, the "independent mass movement" of Black Americans was something fundamentally different – and this difference leads Dunayevskaya to the conclusion that the Workers Party was obligated to develop an organizational response that recognized and supported the potential revolutionary contribution of non-class mobilizations.

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[43] Although these exchanges pre-date the Tendency's more in-depth studies of Lenin, it is interesting to note that Coolidge [McKinney] is relying on the "Lenin of 1908" and Dunayevskaya a Lenin that is mostly post-1914 – that is, after his Hegel studies and focus on dialectics.

> The National Committee resolution (sponsored by [McKinney]) seems to deem [it]... sufficient merely to state that "The Workers Party will not be indifferent to the militancy of the Negro on his own behalf, neither will it denigrate his heroism." It is not a question of denigrating the heroism of the Negro. It is a question of recognizing the validity of the movement and realizing that objectively independent mass movement undermines the capitalist system.[46]

Second, Dunayevskaya offered a materialist interpretation that historicized why the Negro "problem" existed in the United States – in other words, she examined the specificity of American capitalism as it pertained to race and class. In pervious articles, Dunayevskaya argued that capitalist industrialization (and the subsequent proletarianization of Negroes) was rooted in the feudal remnants of Southern slavery. In this essay she articulated why and how this development of a racialized class hierarchy resulted in a unique historical problem in the United States:

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[44] Archive #287. Interestingly, this same quote is used by Breitman; however, his text misquotes Trotsky, reading "... pushes him toward a political and national **unit**." Clearly, the use of "unit" over "unity" subtly changes Trotsky's position. All research indicates the Breitman text misquotes Trotsky on this point. While quite likely a typographic error, it reads as a much more definitive statement on Trotsky's part and misses, I think, the way in which Trotsky wanted us to understand the idea of Blacks being treated as a national minority as a result of oppression rather than a statement or demand for nationhood.

[45] Archive #288.

[46] Archive #289.

> Capitalism, not capitalism in general, but American capitalism as it expanded, of necessity sharpened the basic contradictions of the historic environment in which it functions. It is capitalism tied to cotton plantations. Had industrialization engulfed the South as it had the North, had it disintegrated the black peasantry as capitalism had in Europe when it drove the peasants from the land, had it fully proletarianized the Negro, we would have no special Negro problem, but only a general labour problem.[47]

This is not a subtle difference in approach. It is a profound understanding of the specific historical developments that created a unique opportunity for revolutionary movements. In essence, without a materialist conception of history, even Marxist parties like the Workers Party failed to identify the specific conditions that could lead to the realization of an opportunity to build broader-based, mass support for revolutionary goals both within the United States and abroad.

Ultimately, Dunayevskaya contended that the distinction between the Majority and Minority positions within the Workers Party came down to a distinction between their contending approaches to democracy. Dunayevskaya assessed the independent organizations for Black emancipation (what would become a full-fledged civil rights movement in the 1960s) to be movements primarily for integration – as she noted: "The contradiction between the aim – integration – and the reality – segregation—can not but evoke an organized mass expression."[48] Thus, it is the aspiration of a National minority to gain access to the democratic and legal rights already the possession of whites rather than a national independence movement. However, she argued that McKinney missed the point that such democratic aspirations were also revolutionary:

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[47] Archive #294.

> It is because Comrade [McKinney] does not know how to utilize this preoccupation with democratic rights for the purposes of the coming proletarian revolution that he fears these organizations as an impediment in the way of social revolution and considers the democratic struggle an 'ordeal' instead of a direct part of the struggle for socialism. That is all that is involved in the distinction between the Majority and Minority Resolutions on the Negro Question.[49]

Reading Dunayevskaya's words in regard to the democratic struggle of Blacks, it is useful to recall Marx's own letter to America on the end of slavery:

> An injustice to a section of your people has produced such direful results, let that cease. Let your citizens of today be declared free and equal, without reserve. If you fail to give them citizens' rights, while you demand citizens' duties, there will yet remain a struggle for the future which may again stain your country with your peoples' blood. ... We warn you, then, as brothers in the common cause, to remove every shackle from freedom's limb, and your victory will be complete.[50]

This reflection on freedom as a revolutionary aspiration will be further developed by Dunayevskaya in 1963 with the release of a pamphlet entitled *American*

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[48] Archive #288.
[49] Archive #295.
[50] Karl Marx, "Letter to America," *Workman's Advocate*, September 1865, no. 136, October 14, 1865.

Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard.[51] For our consideration at this point in Dunayevskaya's development, though, the debate within the Workers Party was never resolved. Johnson Forest left the Workers Party in 1947 and temporarily joined the Socialist Workers Party until 1951. Dunayevskaya did publish a further article in *Fourth International* in 1948 that specifically examined the role of industrialization and urbanization in raising a revolutionary consciousness among Blacks.[52] Again, she highlighted the unique "double oppression" of Blacks as a nationally oppressed minority and as workers.[53] Yet, regardless of the persuasive nature of her writing and strength of her empirical research, the position of the Marxist Left generally was not to swing toward the type of support advocated by Dunayevskaya. This difference in conceptualizing subjectivity and supporting non-worker-dominated movements separated her work from that of other organizers and philosophers on the Marxist Left. As we will see in upcoming chapters, this focus on revolutionary subjectivity among non-workers will also play an important part in Dunayevskaya's philosophical and organizational break with James.

Conclusion

In some ways this Chapter's discussion of Dunayevskaya's consideration of the "Negro problem" may appear as a departure from the type of theoretical work she had generally been engaged in throughout the early 1940s. Her work on the law of value, in particular, at first glance has little to do with an assertion that Blacks form a potentially revolutionary grouping in the United States. However, as was argued at the outset of this Chapter, it is precisely out of her considerations of the law of value that she is led to consider the role of agents in contesting and changing the mode of production. What is remarkable about her analysis is that it goes beyond the orthodox privileging of the working class to attempt to understand the many ways that individuals can organize and challenge capitalism – even if not as members of an overtly socialist party or under the direct guidance of Marx. Revolutionary subjectivity is a question of consciousness (understood as an experience of self) but not necessarily one that needs to be constrained by a direct relationship to the mode of production. When freed of the old orthodoxy, Dunayevskaya does not dispense with "the workers" but attempts to see where struggles can become mutually supportive and ultimately revolutionary. The desire of Blacks in the United States to realize democratic equality with other citizens is a movement to which socialists (members of the Workers Party specifically) should give their support, according to Dunayevskaya's analysis. Moreover, she suggested that Blacks in the United States faced a "double" oppression that could not help but lead to resistance and democratic demands.

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[51] Raya Dunayevskaya, *American Civilization on Trail: Black Masses As Vanguard*, 4 ed. (Detroit: News & Letters Publications, 1983).
[52] Archive #311-323.
[53] Archive #323.

Dunayevskaya was very deliberate in developing her argument about the place and potential revolutionary role of Black organizations in the United States. As outlined early in the Chapter, she turned to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky and their considerations of national movements for direction. For Lenin, in particular (although, he echoes Marx), it is at times necessary to support national independence movements as a mechanism for a broader challenge to the universalizing effects of imperialist capitalism. Dunayevskaya drew from Lenin's National Theses to apply the same logic to Blacks in America (this was also not a tremendous leap as Lenin and Trotsky both identify Blacks as a national group). The result of her application of Lenin's and Trotsky's logic to the question of Black movements is the advocacy of support—even for the bourgeois leadership of Black organizations. More strikingly, Dunayevskaya revealed that it was the same logic that ultimately buttressed the Workers Party's support for Trade Unions – another orthodoxy that was accepted by rote rather than critical engagement.

Although the Tendency worked within the Workers Party to realize a program to support Black movements and develop a plan of action for the incorporation of Black activists and their concerns into the Party, they were ultimately unsuccessful. However, the question of how to involve non-workers in the challenge to capitalism remained a key concern of Dunayevskaya for the rest of her life. As we will see in subsequent Chapters, after leaving the Workers Party in 1947, Dunayevskaya begins to write about youth and women in addition to Blacks as revolutionary subjects. However, these discussions must also be contextualized in the debates around the departure from the Workers Party and the Tendency's overall assessment of the weaknesses of international Trotskyism. We turn to these issues in the next Chapter.

Chapter Six

The Workers Party and Johnson Forest

Introduction

The previous Chapter departed from a chronological approach to the development of Dunayevskaya's philosophy to examine the place of revolutionary subjectivities in her theoretical and political work. The result of this "departure" was a close examination of and engagement with her writings on the "Negro Question" and the role of Black organizations in realizing revolutionary change. In this Chapter we return to the historical context to trace the Tendency's participation in the two Trotskyist parties in the United States, the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party.

The context for this Chapter is the period of proposed reunification between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party in 1946-47 and the decision of Johnson Forest to resign from the Workers Party after the failure of unity talks. As the reader may recall from Chapter Two, American Trotskyism under-went a significant break in 1939-40 that resulted in the formation of the Workers Party under the leadership of Max Shachtman. Dunayevskaya had personally broken with Trotsky's position on the USSR in 1939 and had subsequently left the Socialist Workers Party and joined the Workers Party. After 1941, Dunayevskaya and James formed a minority tendency within the Workers Party. The Johnson Forest tendency rejected the bureaucratic collectivist theories that dominated the Majority position in the Workers Party; however, the hope was that the Workers Party would furnish a more open forum for theoretical debate while maintaining a strong relationship with the masses.[1] The place of Johnson Forest, however, was always tenuous within the Workers Party. While the rejection of Trotsky's assessment of the nature of the USSR allowed for there to be some shared ground, the Tendency also supported elements of Trotsky's "Transitional Program" which would have allowed them to continue to work with the Socialist Workers Party.[2] In fact, the existence of two embattled Trotskyist parties in the United States was a source of great embarrassment to the Fourth International.

Perhaps, in an effort to end the international embarrassment, the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party did undertake unity discussions between

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[1] The theoretical battle of the nature of the Soviet Union is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

[2] The "Transitional Program" was outlined by Trotsky in 1938 as a discussion document for the founding Congress of the Fourth International. The full title of the essay was "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: the Mobilization of the Masses Around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power". The "Transitional Program" advocated, *inter alia*, the building of a mass, proletarian party; avoiding sectarianism; and state ownership during the transitional period *en route* to socialism. It was in this document that Trotsky made his famous assertion: "The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a *degenerated workers' state*. Such is the social diagnosis. The political diagnosis has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism" (Leon Trotsky. "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Mobilization of the Masses around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power." Web page, 1938 [accessed 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1938-tp/index.htm#USSR).

February and July 1947. The historical record on the ultimate cause of the failure of these talks is varied and disputed. Shachtman biographer, Peter Drucker, lays the blame for the failure at the feet of Johnson Forest; although, he does acknowledge that Shachtman's own shifting focus away from Trotskyism finally doomed reunification:

> Shachtman's new orientation toward international social democracy and broad anti-Communist unity doomed his last hope to reintegrating his followers into the Fourth International. His idea of reunifying the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party, put forward with new emphasis in 1945-46, actually seemed plausible for a few bewildering months from February to July 1947... . But reunification failed, due in part to Jim Cannon's renewed hostility and CLR James's decision to take his followers out of the Workers Party.[3]

In contradistinction to Drucker's assessment, contemporaneous documents from Dunayevskaya's archives tell a much more ambiguous story of the causes of failure—not least of which was the rumour-mongering by the leadership of both parties. Regardless of the specific combination of causes, the debates surrounding unity and the eventual resignation from the Workers Party by Johnson Forest was an important event in the philosophical and organizational development of Dunayevskaya.

With this general context in mind, this Chapter will focus on the "1947 moment" for the Johnson Forest tendency. We will first examine the position of the Tendency in regard to the unity discussions. Consideration will then turn to the context of the Tendency's eventual decision to leave the Workers Party.

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[3] Drucker, p. 191. It is interesting to note how easily Drucker's recount ignored the democratic practice of the Tendency or that the leadership was not exclusively under the direction of James.

Particular attention will be devoted to two key documents developed by the Tendency. The first was a "Balance Sheet" that assessed the Tendency's participation in the Workers Party while also providing an overall critique of the Fourth International. The second was a pamphlet entitled "The Invading Socialist Society" which was intended to situate Johnson Forest in relation to the Fourth International. This Chapter runs the risk of creating the impression that these questions of party membership were remote to the philosophical work of the Tendency; however, it is the contention of this Chapter that it was the philosophical implications of membership in each organization that drove Dunayevskaya and the Tendency to seek a change in party affiliation.

Unity Talks

The realization of the Johnson Forest exodus from the Workers Party was effected through a two-step process. In the first instance, the Tendency voiced its strong support for reunification of the two parties. Once the failure of the unity talks was clear, however, the Tendency enacted the second step which was to resign its membership from the Workers Party and to implement an interim period of eight weeks to prepare for membership in the Socialist Workers Party. The interim period was intended to allow the Tendency to focus on its own political and philosophical positions so that these would be clear and well articulated before membership was taken up in the Socialist Workers Party.

The Johnson Forest tendency embraced the potential unity discussions between the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party as an opportunity to correct an error in theory (bureaucratic collectivism and defense of Russia) and to rejoin American Trotskyism under one banner. Although these were the grounds for the Tendency's support, what is most significant here is the way in which they embraced the potential for unity: by writing and theorizing. The potential to realize unity among the Trotskyists, for the Johnson Forest tendency, was the opportunity to build a mass party engaged in world revolution. The Tendency's enthusiasm was apparent in the "Resolution on Unity" presented to the 1946 Workers Convention, in which they pragmatically noted: "The division between the two organizations is a cause of scandal for the Fourth International in the United States, confuses the proletariat, and diverts the energy and attention of the membership."[4] Second, the opening of unity discussions began a period of broader international consultations among Trotskyist organizations. This exposure offered the opportunity for the Johnson Forest tendency generally, and Dunayevskaya specifically, to argue the state capitalist thesis internationally.

An Open Letter to the Membership

In April 1947, the Tendency published a "Letter to the Membership" in which they outlined their principled reasons for supporting unity with the Socialist Workers Party and critiqued the direction and leadership of the Workers Party.[5] The Johnson Forest tendency began this open letter by noting that factional fights and disagreements are not in and of themselves signs of failure; in fact, the introduction to the letter argued:

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[4] Archive #809.
[5] Archive #641-648.

> Only Utopians who know nothing of the history of Bolshevism can believe that 2000 will become 20,000 in the class struggle without upheavals, conflicts, factions, groupings, etc. That is the way the proletariat learns, different layers come into action, victories and defeats occur and sharp and sudden changes are necessary. As the class struggle develops, theoretical problems are illuminated, old forces tire, new ones emerge.[6]

The more significant issue that was raised, however, was the assessment of the failure of Shachtman to conduct unity discussions with the Socialist Workers Party in good faith. Yet, one can read between the lines of this open letter and realize that the critique proffered was much deeper and more theoretically significant than a "bad review" of the Majority position within the Workers Party. The Tendency used this letter to begin an assessment of the seven-year history of the Workers Party – a more detailed "Balance Sheet" was subsequently released by the Tendency in August 1947, to which we will return in a moment.

In the letter, Johnson Forest once again took aim at Shachtman's bureaucratic collectivist thesis, asserting:

> Today, the Workers Party lives according to the following evaluation of contemporary politics: The Stalinist regime is bureaucratic collectivist, totalitarian. It is ruled by a clique which practices the leader-cult, holds down the backward masses, miseducates them by force and deception and bureaucratically manipulates them. The Stalinist parties are totalitarian parties. They too are cliques which practice the leader-cult, deceive the backward masses and bureaucratically manipulate them… .[7]

In other words, Shachtman extended his own thesis of bureaucratic collectivism to become a general critique of all opposing ideas and tendencies such that he no longer, according to Johnson Forest, saw the revolutionary potential of the proletariat. For the Tendency, the Workers Party's Bolshevik politics had given way to petty-bourgeois politics. Moreover, the Johnson Forest tendency charged that the Workers Party had failed to adopt resolutions on a number of key questions: "For years no one has been able to get a word out of Shachtman on the theory of retrogression which dirtied the pages of the *New International* month after month. ... The party waits for a resolution on the Negro question... . The International waits in vain for some guidance on the jungle that is the theory of bureaucratic collectivism."[8] In other words, according to this assessment, the Workers Party had failed to live up to the historical call of creating a workers party with mass appeal in the United States. And why had it failed? Precisely because it had contributed nothing theoretically in its seven years of existence beyond a muddled bureaucratic collectivist position.

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[6] Archive #641.
[7] Archive #642.

However, the open letter did not reserve criticism exclusively for Shachtman and the Workers Party, Johnson Forest also noted that "Unfortunately, the Socialist Workers Party leadership bears its share of responsibility for the influence of the Workers Party over the membership. ... It [the Socialist Workers Party] rejoiced at the difficulties, saw only their negative side and hoped for the disintegration of the Workers Party so as to be able to say: 'We told you so.'"[9] So, both parties and their leaders bore responsibility for on-going disunity. Given such strong critiques of both parties it is reasonable to ask why Johnson Forest supported unity at all? The answer resided in the commitment to build a large mass party in America and in advancing a theoretical foundation for the international movement as a whole:

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[8] Archive #644, 645.
[9] Archive #647.

> We are confident that in the unified movement the mischief that the Workers Party leadership has made with the fundamentals of Marxism will be short-lived. They were able to continue it only because they were isolated in the period during the war. We were confident that sooner or later, as the international Movement... developed and events began to unroll, the political rubbish which Shachtman had accumulated would be blown to the winds.[10]

In closing their open letter, James and Dunayevskaya indicated that the Tendency was not only advocating unity discussions; but should unity fail, would also be reconsidering its membership within the Workers Party.[11] This "consideration" reached its own climax in July 1947 at which point it became apparent that the unity discussions had failed. At a conference held July 5 – 6, 1947, the Johnson Forest tendency passed a resolution that acknowledged the 1940 split of the Socialist Workers Party and Workers Party was "unprincipled". The resolution further linked the division between the parties as a problem typical of "American radicalism" that lacked revolutionary vision:

> In the 1940 split and in its subsequent evolution, the Workers Party expressed in concentrated form a basic problem of American radicalism: hostility to world imperialism but an inability to assimilate the principles of

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[10] Archive #647.

[11] Notably, it was the inclusion of this "consideration" that caused some to question the Tendency's real commitment to unity. In fact, criticism reached outside the U.S. parties, in a letter to Natalia Serdova Trotsky, September 28, 1947, Dunayevskaya countered the argument that Johnson Forest had damaged the prospects for unity as a result of the decision to leave the Workers Party. See Archive #735 – 738 for an extended explanation and defense by Dunayevskaya.

> Bolshevism owing to the absence of any conscious revolutionary perspective in the United States.[12]

The conclusion of this "failure" for the Johnson Forest tendency was that "[a]fter seven years the Workers Party Majority, has no theoretical contribution to make to the building of the Party in the United States."[13] While the Tendency had supported unity, the resolution now argued that the Tendency could no longer work within the Workers Party. As a result of this assessment,

> The Johnson Forest Minority proposes for itself as its next step the task of integrating itself in the Socialist Workers Party. It will seek to learn from experiences, to penetrate always more deeply into the mass proletarian movement and to test the ideas that it developed during the seven years, not as a faction in the discussion of theses, but in the closest comradely association for the common task of winning workers to the party.[14]

The resolution closed by requesting a transfer in membership from the Workers Party to the Socialist Workers Party – a request that was immediately (and understandably) rejected by the Workers Party Political Committee.[15]

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[12] Archive #649.

[13] Archive #650.

[14] Archive #657, underlining in original.

[15] "The PC rejected the Johnsonite request for a transfer from the W.P. to the S.W.P. as a cowardly evasion of a responsibility which is that of the Johnson faction alone and as an attempt to shift the task of making a decision from the shoulders of the Johnson faction, where it properly belongs, to the party leadership"(Archive #948). In his biography of Shachtman, Drucker recorded the decision of the Johnson Forest tendency to withdraw their membership: "As late as the end of May, Shachtman still hoped that the Fourth International's 'moral pressure' would make unity possible. But in July, C.L.R. James took his followers out of the Workers Party, despite Shachtman's appeals to them to stay, leaving it with under 400 members. For Shachtman, the Johnsonite split reduced the idea of unity to a 'bad joke.' In September the Workers Party took back its promise to abide by the world congress decisions [which supported unity]" (Drucker, p. 213).

The Interim Period

With the failure of the unity talks, and having decided to leave the Workers Party, the Johnson Forest tendency used the intervening eight weeks (the "interim period") to outline the key elements of the state capitalist approach and the implications of using it as a lens for viewing post-war capitalism. The Tendency also used this period to consolidate its own membership and to publish several pamphlets, membership bulletins, and essays. One of the significant documents in this period was a pamphlet entitled "Trotskyism in the United States, 1947: A Balance Sheet" subtitled "The Workers Party and the Johnson Forest Tendency".[16] The "Balance Sheet" began by examining the nature of the split between Trotskyists in the United States. As noted previously in the open letter, Johnson Forest continued to identify the split as "unprincipled", going further in this document to state that "The split was the betrayal of our movement," with Shachtman specifically singled out: "Trotsky's invitation to Shachtman at least to discuss the crisis [in American Trotskyism] was impertinently ignored – one of the meanest, most cowardly and most undemocratic actions in the history of Trotskyism."[17] However, these "political" and "character" assessments aside, the "Balance Sheet" demonstrated a clear expression of why the split was judged as unprincipled. The reasoning was firmly philosophical.

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[16] Archive #789.
[17] Archive #789.

The "Balance Sheet"

In the "Balance Sheet" Johnson Forest recounted that the Workers Party claimed the necessity of its birth on (at least) two grounds. The first was to stand against what was loosely named Cannonism. The leadership of what would emerge as the Workers Party believed that Cannon's approach was far too conservative to ever significantly raise the revolutionary consciousness of the American proletariat. The second reason was to challenge the assessment of Russia as a workers' state and, instead, advance the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. A generous reading of Shachtman's leadership, such as that suggested by biographer Peter Drucker, sees him as a defender of "true Marxism"; however, Johnson Forest argued that both the classification of Cannon as conservative and the proposition of bureaucratic collectivism by the Workers Party Majority failed to develop a successful program of recruitment among the proletariat to a mass party in the United States.[18] "The Workers Party in 1940 maintained the fiction that it subscribed to the Transitional Program for the United States. Yet the driving force of the split was the conviction that the Workers Party could build a party with its own methods (then unformulated) against the 'bureaucratic conservatism' of Cannon."[19]

Of course, Johnson Forest could not escape entirely from the question why they had subscribed to such an "unprincipled" split in American Trotskyism in the first place and they used the "Balance Sheet" to answer just such a question. The

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[18] Drucker, p. 179.
[19] Archive #791.

Tendency began simply by offering a *mea culpa*: "We split also? Very well. We declare that it was an unpardonable error. The argument remains [against the Workers Party leadership]."[20] This *mea culpa* did not diminish the critique of the Workers Party or the principled reasons members of the Tendency held when they originally joined the Workers Party. One of the key "principled" reasons for joining the Workers Party initially arose from the emerging philosophical position on the "Russian Question", developed independently by both James and Dunayevskaya: "The Johnson Forest tendency became conscious of itself early in 1941 in the discussion of the Russian Question. …Johnson Forest, from the very beginning, considered a break with Trotsky on a fundamental question to be the most serious step imaginable for any Marxist."[21] Although the Socialist Workers Party was more inclined to support the Transitional Program, having adopted James' resolution on the Negro Question, the analysis of Russia as a workers' state was increasingly untenable to James or Dunayevskaya. Moreover, the Socialist Workers Party failed to take a stand against the war, "It [Socialist Workers Party] put forward a theory of telescoping the imperialist war with the anti-Fascist war which shocked the comrades of the Workers Party immeasurably."[22] It is in this regard that we also see a commendation for Shachtman: "Shachtman at the time handled this with firmness, moderation, and good sense."[23] In other words, the "error" of the Workers Party was much more apparent in hindsight. What would be truly "unpardonable" would be continued participation in a flawed Workers Party.

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[20] Archive #804.

[21] Recall that it was February 20, 1941 that Dunayevskaya first articulated her state capitalist thesis, see "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a Capitalist Society." Archive #795.

[22] Archive #808.

The "Balance Sheet", however, was not only a negative document. In a more positive sense, the "Balance Sheet" allowed the Tendency to outline its own philosophical approach to conducting Marxist analysis. Thus, we see the Johnson Forest tendency's political program broken down into three straight-forward categories: the Russian Question; the re-examination of *Capital*; and, the philosophical preparation of Party cadres. First, on the Russian Question, the Tendency succinctly enunciated the basis of the state capitalist position, noting: "The Russian Question is central for the theoretical and political development of the Fourth International. But as we have repeatedly written from the very beginning, the world crisis is not part of the Russian Question. The Russian Question is only part of the world crisis."[24] Second, and this also was derived from the analysis of statification implicit in the state capitalist position, was a statement in support of what Dunayevskaya later named "Marx's humanism" drawn from a new engagement with *Capital*. In other words, the Tendency was demanding a focus on the worker with analysis of both the relations of production and the revolutionary potential of the class as a whole. Johnson Forest put it this way:

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[23] Archive #808.

[24] Archive #795. This is a key distinction that, despite the assertion that this has been the point "since the beginning" really only came into bold relief within this document and the "Invading Socialist Society". In other words, this was a clear statement that went beyond the suggestion that state capitalism was merely a Russian phenomenon, somehow still separate and distinct from world capitalism. As we will see in the subsequent work, Johnson Forest are naming the stage of capitalist development encountered globally throughout the war period and beyond as state capitalist.

> We were convinced on a re-examination of Marx's *Capital* that the solution to the economic ills of capitalism was the human solution, not any reorganization of property but the emergence of the proletariat ready to use the vast potentialities created in it by capitalism itself.[25]

Moreover, Johnson Forest drew an important distinction between their reading of the "human solution" and the "potentialities" created by capitalism and the approach of the Workers Party:

> Its bible [the Workers Party leadership] has been Lenin's mistaken conception in **What is to be Done?** That the party alone, the intellectuals, can bring socialist consciousness to the masses. Trotsky took care in his last book to expose Lenin's error, and showed that Lenin himself admitted it. The book shows with hitherto unrevealed insight and perspective the dialectical relation between leadership and rank and file from the beginning of Russian Bolshevism to its end.[26]

Third, Johnson Forest focused on their commitment to both the American proletariat, rejecting retrogressionism, and supporting the "Negro Question" on the basis of Lenin's "National Question."[27] They argued that it was the original inclination of the Workers Party to organize among the workers, but that this inclination was overwhelmed by disappointment and disillusionment that was the direct result of a failure of the Workers Party to organize and prepare their own cadres with a strong philosophical foundation:

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[25] Archive #796. This sentiment takes on particular theoretical clarity in the 1950-51 period. See Chapter 10.

[26] Archive #805.

[27] "Retrogression" is a term that was prevalent among the Left, particularly of this time. Johnson Forest were very specific in what they meant when using it in this essay: "The theory of retrogression can be summed up in a sentence: the decline of capitalist society has been such that it has unfitted the proletariat for socialist revolution. ... the Menshevism of our time" (Archive #793). Interestingly, one wonders if neoliberalism – at least in its triumphalist form—is not the theory of retrogression of our time.

> The Workers Party has gone to the proletariat, has worked hard, has gained nothing but disappointment and disillusionment and cannot understand why. Trotsky saw the necessity of the petty-bourgeois boys and girls turning to the workers. He was absolutely mistaken in his belief that the Workers Party did not want to do that. They wanted to. They did it. But they have failed hopelessly because they neglected and grossly maligned his insistence on the highest theoretical participation of the cadres.[28]

Underlying these three categories, however, was one final "philosophical" problem that was seen as the fatal flaw in the Workers Party by Johnson Forest, that is, the rejection (either explicitly or implicitly) of the dialectic. In tracing the early emergence of the Workers Party from the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party, Johnson Forest noted in the "Balance Sheet" that an essay co-authored by Burnham and Shachtman for *The New International* set the stage for a fundamental theoretical flaw to accompany the formation of the Workers Party. In the article, Shachtman argued that it was not necessary to reach a unified position on the dialectic, but that political issues alone could determine political unity:

> When Shachtman joined with Burnham to say that they could both agree to disagree on dialectic without prejudice to concrete political issues, Trotsky reacted violently. Well before the split he wrote immediately to Shachtman that 'The section on the dialectic (is) the greatest blow that you, personally, as the editor of **The New International** could have delivered to Marxist theory.' In Trotsky's view, 'It was absolutely necessary to explain why the American 'radical' intellectuals accept Marxism without the dialectic (a clock without a spring). The secret is simple. In no

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[28] Archive #799.

> other country has there been such a rejection of the class struggle as in the land of unlimited "opportunity."[29]

The willingness to disregard theoretical debates, particularly around dialectics, demonstrated a fundamental failure to articulate a Marxist analysis, according to Johnson Forest and was certainly among the chief failures of the Workers Party. Without the Hegelian dialectic, the Tendency asserted, retrogression easily "slips in":

> If the Johnson Forest tendency has been able to make any contribution to Bolshevism, it has been because for it the study of the Hegelian dialectic in its Marxist form, of Marxian economics, and of the method of the great Marxist revolutionaries is nothing more than intellectual preparation and the purging of bourgeois ideas in order to be able to understand and interpret and organize the instinctive drive and revolutionary instincts of the rank and file proletarian and the petty-bourgeois but idealistic and eager youth.[30]

It is clear from the historical narrative embedded in the "Balance Sheet" that the Johnson Forest tendency always held a somewhat precarious position within the Workers Party – particularly as state capitalist theory directly challenged bureaucratic collectivism. They noted that "[t]he Workers Party for three years kept the political analysis of the Russian state by the Johnson Forest tendency out of the pages of the *New International* and the internal bulletin."[31]

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[29] Archive #790, emphasis in original. Leon Trotsky. "In Defense of Marxism." Web page, 1942 [accessed 15 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1942-dm/index.htm. The reference to a "clock without a spring" is Trotsky's title for an essay on the dialectic.
[30] Archive #805.
[31] Archive #806. Interestingly, this sentiment runs counter to Drucker's account of debates in the *New International*. As he noted: "Shachtman's intransigent defense of Marxism as he understood it, combined with his spirit of tolerance, made the Workers Party a place for lively, even iconoclastic debate, which made it stand out among U.S. Marxist groups" (Drucker, p. 130).

With the privilege of hindsight, it is not surprising that the Tendency would have removed itself at some point from the Workers Party; yet, rather than casting this as a failure of either the Left in the United States generally, or a specific failure on the part of the Tendency to work within a party, it reveals the seriousness with which these debates were held and pursued. In the case of Johnson Forest the break also presented an opportunity to clearly define what the Tendency stood for and how it would conduct both its analysis and its politics – regardless of party affiliation.

European Correspondence

In order to facilitate integration with the Socialist Workers Party, Dunayevskaya was dispatched to Europe during the interim period to participate in the lead up to the Fourth International World Congress on behalf of the Tendency.[32] As was the practice of Dunayevskaya, and the Tendency generally, she corresponded with the Johnson Forest membership on a regular basis between July 25 – October 2, 1947. While the theoretical significance of these letters is limited, they do reflect Dunayevskaya's tremendous organizational energy. During her time in Europe she worked tirelessly to promote the state capitalist analysis developed by the Johnson Forest tendency and to build linkages with other like-minded groups in Europe and beyond. In terms of drawing out Dunayevskaya's underlying thinking as it will develop later under the rubric of Marxist Humanism, two items are of interest from this collection of letters and reports. The first is an affinity Dunayevskaya demonstrated toward African independence movements. The second is her singling out youth for special attention, organizational support, and development while in Europe.

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[32] One cannot help but notice that within the Tendency, Dunayevskaya's participation was recognized and valued – indeed, the Tendency's name shares reference to both her (Forest) and CLR James (Johnson). However, outside of the Tendency, it was common to see references to Johnsonites and Johnsonism. In fact, even Dunayevskaya made such a reference in her letters from Europe. While we could conclude that the reference exclusively to Johnson is more for the sake of "short hand" or brevity, it also serves to highlight that women did not often hold leadership positions within the radical Left at this point in history.

On August 8, 1947, Dunayevskaya wrote to CLR James of her chance meeting with a Camerounian on her way to Lyon. The discussion focused on the Cameroun independence movement. It is telling what she reported:

> It seems that ... during the war a movement for independence from France started there, so spontaneous and overwhelming was it that, without a party or any other form of political organization, (their trade union is strong and has 3 million members) the people, literally en masse, turned out during an election campaign, disregarded entirely the established Fench [sic] colonial government, elected their people, enacted their laws; everybody seems to belong to this movement; there seems to be no such thing as membership cards; it is just taken for granted that all are members because all are.[33]

Her analysis, even from such a brief conversation, demonstrated the attentiveness and concern for organizational questions, as well as the Tendency's affinity for large mass movements.

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[33] Archive #675, underlining in original. Dunayevskaya notes this meeting retrospectively as the most significant aspect of European trip: "In 1947 the Fourth International allowed me to present the theory of state capitalism at their world conference in France. I debated Ernest Mandel (Germain) there. What is most memorable from that trip was, however, not the Trotskyists but the meeting with a Camerounian who told me of the revolution they had when the Germans left and the "Free French" were going to return." "Introduction and Overview to Volume XII" in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Guide to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development,* News and Letters, p. 59.

Outside of the serendipity of this chance meeting, Dunayevskaya's trip to Lyon was to attend the socialist youth conference. Dunayevskaya focused her report to James on the discussion of the conference; she also enclosed a letter directly to the youth participating in the Johnson Forest tendency. She began by identifying the youth as the "vital nerve of the revolutionary movement."[34] The purpose of writing to the youth directly was not simply to report on the meeting in France, but rather to highlight both the need for and possibility of international solidarity among youth – what she called the basis for "the reconstruction of society on communist beginnings."[35] At the French meeting, Dunayevskaya found that the Trotskyist youth had played a key leadership role in a recent Renault strike and that these youth were eager to correspond with other youth organizations. Thus, she wrote:

> In any case, here is the beginnings of an international revolutionary youth movement, and from there we can march forward. By the way, in order to allow themselves for a broad mass basis, they have not in their constitution stated that they were politically subordinate to party, so that they are the revolutionary youth, based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism, but not only organizationally but politically remain autonomous. I do not know how it is to work out in the US; this is best for you to decide after the fusion with the Socialist Workers Party youth.[36]

It is clear that youth were another subjectivity that Dunayevskaya believed held tremendous revolutionary potential.

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[34] Archive #679.
[35] Archive #679.
[36] Archive #680.

Although one may be inclined to think that participating in the World Congress of the Fourth International would have been daunting, every indication from Dunayevskaya's correspondence indicates quite the opposite. She was at all times secure in her position and game for debate. But it is remarkable that the outstanding elements of her own memory of these events focused on the Camerounian – not the individual *per se*, but the organizational (that is "spontaneous") form of their revolution. From these early days, we can clearly see the beginnings of Dunayevskaya's conclusion that "practice is also a form of theory" and her identification of revolutionary subjectivities (colonized peoples, youth) outside of the traditional, industrial worker. Notably, these embryonic ideas would take on an immediacy and weight in Dunayevskaya's later studies of Lenin and Hegel. For now, it is sufficient for us to make note of the direction of her thinking.

"The Invading Socialist Society"

In addition to the "Balance Sheet" and Dunayevskaya's participation in the World Congress, the Johnson Forest tendency used the "interim" period to produce internal bulletins for its members and to establish the key contributions of Johnson Forest to Trotskyism writ large. While in Europe, Dunayevskaya actively participated in the production of a lengthy polemic entitled "The Invading Socialist Society" (Johnson, Forest, and Stone are listed as the authors).[37] The document was primarily directed against the theoretical direction advocated by Germain (Ernest Mandel) for the Fourth International, as the essay opened: "The first thing to be done once and for all is to destroy Germain's illusion that he is interpreting Trotsky's positions of 1939."[38] However, the greater philosophic purpose here was not to defend Trotsky's legacy, but instead to argue for a different critical direction – distinct from both Trotsky and the Mandel-influenced Fourth International. In order to achieve this broader purpose, the pamphlet first outlined what constituted "Trotsky's positions":

> In 1940 Trotsky argued: 1)that the defeat of Russia would mean the dismemberment of the USSR and give imperialism a further long lease on life; 2)that only the defeat of the bureaucracy by the revolution would preserve state property in the USSR; 3)that the Stalinist parties abroad would desert the Kremlin regime and capitulate to their own bourgeoisies.[39]

However, asserted the Tendency, 1947 was a much different context than that experienced by Trotsky. Moreover, the pamphlet also critiqued Shachtman's bureaucratic collectivist thesis. The Tendency argued: "We thus have today in fact a more complicated relation of fundamental forces and perspectives than those on which Trotsky based his positions."[40] Johnson Forest were not contesting that fundamental tenets of Trotskyism were in need of revision – in fact, the state capitalist position was precisely that—but the manner in which Mandel was undertaking such a rethinking: "What is so terrible is that fundamental concepts are being changed, altered, transformed, shifted around, without the theoreticians ever stopping to think of what they are doing. It is proceeding for the most part, unconsciously and empirically."[41] So, what was at stake in "The Invading Socialist Society"? While one is tempted to answer "world revolution", such a generalization does a great disservice to the polemical and theoretical points being raised in the pamphlet. Rather, in preparation for participation in the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International, the Johnson Forest tendency was establishing how their analysis differed from the contemporary direction of international Trotskyism. Moreover, this difference was not simply with the Workers Party and Shachtman, but was much more broadly critical and stood as an important marker in Dunayevskaya's own development.

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[37] The title of this pamphlet was taken from a phrase in section III, "Historical Materialism" of Friedrich Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1944).
[38] Archive #874.
[39] Archive #875.
[40] Archive #875.

"The Invading Socialist Society" was still rooted in the state capitalist analysis developed by the Tendency. Here, however, we see this analysis extended such that the "Russian Question" was recast as a problem of epochal change in world capitalism. Thus, Russia was not Trotsky's degenerated workers state; nor was Mandel's notion of the "dual character of bureaucratic intervention"[42] a satisfactory, or revolutionary, approach to the "objective" situation of the post-war world. In other words, Johnson Forest were arguing that the Fourth International, among others, was unable to theorize the Russian counter-revolution and the expansion of Russian and American imperialism because they failed to understand the current (1947) stage of capitalist development as state capitalist. As Johnson Forest noted: "The leadership and policies of the Communist Parties therefore can be summed up as the political form of capitalism, state capitalism, which involves, not the expansion of finance-capital in the old way, but the incorporation of individual economies within powerful centralized economies operating on a continental scale."[43]

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[41] Archive #875.
[42] Archive #875.

Taking the state capitalist analysis of Russia seriously, argued Johnson Forest, led to key "world theoretical" conclusions about the nature and development of capitalism. Chief among these conclusions were the following:

1. in the early stages of the development of capitalism, the expansion of surplus value and profit coincide in a system of free enterprise; as capitalism develops (expands), the law of value faces increasing incidents of crisis and disorder in national economies results in what Johnson Forest name "revolutions in value"[44];
2. capitalism develops as state capitalism, in this sense, capital is less restrained than in previous stages; more importantly, this stage of expansion witnesses the destruction of individual capitalists in the pursuit of more perfect mechanisms of labour repression (control).

As Johnson Forest concluded: "For us, **production** in Russia is subject to the laws of the capitalist world market. The bureaucracy is as subjected to the basic laws of capitalism as is any capitalist class. All the monstrosities of the Stalinist society are rooted in the laws of the capital-labour relation which reach their highest expression in Russia."[45]

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[43] Archive #882. It bears remembrance here that Lenin's analysis drew the linkage between finance capital and imperialism – that is, what Lenin famously called the monopoly stage of capitalism.

[44] Archive #887.

Before further engaging the core argument put forward by Johnson Forest in this document, one additional aspect of the state capitalist stage of development needs to be acknowledged – that is, the imperialist nature of the Russian state and its American (but also state capitalist) counter-part. Generally, discussions of imperialism among the Trotskyist movement focused on American state imperialism. However, Johnson Forest pushed the analysis, first introduced by Lenin, such that the focus was on state capitalism and imperialism. "If Stalinist Russia is a vast state capitalist and military trust (which Johnson-Forest asserts that it is), American imperialism is a vast state-capitalist and military syndicate, and the distinction is evidence of the clear vision with which Lenin saw into the future."[46] Just as Russia had demonstrated a colonial impulse toward its sphere of influence, practicing renewed colonialism in Eastern Europe post-war, the American program of post-war reconstruction fell under the critical gaze of Johnson Forest:

> During the war the United States government transformed itself into a mighty state-trust. It planned its production and consumption. But the American state-trust, in the struggle for world domination, embarked upon a

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[45] Archive #887, emphasis in original. The reference to bureaucracy here was intended to force the reader to recall that both Shachtman and Mandel based their analysis of the "Russian Question" on an assessment – albeit significantly different in their conclusions – of the nature of the Russian bureaucracy. "It is clear that we face a serious problem. It is not to be solved by an analysis of 'bureaucracies' but by the analysis of capital" argued Johnson Forest (Archive #882).
[46] Archive #889.

> government-regulated world-economic program. It integrated with its own the economy of Great Britain; it poured billions into the thin economic veins of its allies; it bought and distributed agricultural production on a world-wide scale. It acted as collective capitalist on a hitherto undreamt-of scale.[47]

In assessing both American and Russian imperialism through the lens of state capitalism, the Johnson Forest tendency furthered Lenin's assessment of the "monopoly stage" of capitalism, leading to the assertion that post-war capitalism was the stage of state capitalism on a global scale. Moreover, they asserted that this was both an ultimate and destructive phase of capitalist development – a stage that destroyed individual capitalists while also attempting a greater suppression of workers. Thus, Russia and the United States represented opposite poles in the global configuration of capitalism, but both were state capitalist. As long as theorists such as Mandel failed to recognize the capitalist nature of Russia or the "plan" of American capitalism, they could also not help but miss the resistance of workers. Finally, Johnson Forest refocused attention on the cause of workers revolution:

> Under our eyes, the masses, the fountain of all Marxist theory, are creating the basis of the Fourth International. But to see this, Germain will have to tear himself from his mesmerized contemplation of degeneration in Russia and grapple with the degeneration of the proletariat, with the stages of development of our movement and its present situation, shaped not by Russian degeneration, but world capitalism.[48]

Moreover, not only was the Russian proletariat singled out, but Johnson Forest called the American proletariat "the most advanced" and argued that the self-mobilization of the workers was the most significant social and political feature "of our age."[49]

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[47] Archive #889.
[48] Archive #877.

Although "The Invading Socialist Society" took up a number of other issues of importance to the Fourth International (for example, the nature of Bolshevism and embracing the slogan "The Socialist United States of Europe") it was the clear linkage of state capitalist analysis to the emerging (and different) form of imperialism that was the most significant contribution of the essay. One is struck by the prescience of the analysis, as well. Consider this observation on American imperialism: "But great as is the economic power of American imperialism, this is counter-balanced by the colossal drain upon its resources of maintaining the world-wide system of satellites within its syndicate, the hatred it engenders in revolutionary forces everywhere... ."[50] Moreover, we are able to see the Johnson Forest tendency utilizing a historical analysis that significantly applied Marx's, Lenin's, and Trotsky's ideas in a manner that challenged the emerging orthodoxy and produced a unique assessment of post-war capitalism. Such analysis will take on a clearer form during the "philosophical exchange" between 1949 – 1951, and will ultimately find full expression in Dunayevskaya's Marxist Humanism.

Ultimately, "The Invading Socialist Society" gave expression to the theoretical work undertaken by the Tendency. It also situated the Johnson Forest leaders in comparison to other Trotskyists internationally. Finally, the pamphlet was imbued with a sense of urgency – even revolutionary zeal—that alerts the reader to the energy and commitment buttressing the Tendency's theoretical and practical work.

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[49] Archive #884.
[50] Archive #889.

Conclusion

The failure of the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party to achieve unity in 1947 could have terminated the Johnson Forest tendency as a vigorous part of the American Left. However, as this Chapter has demonstrated, the Tendency believed that the debates and turn-over among the parties ultimately spoke to a vibrancy among members and the importance of strong philosophical foundations for Marxist political movements. Moreover, the Tendency clearly believed that a great deal was at stake if the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party did not embrace the philosophical tools for mass organizing. Given the failures of the Workers Party outlined by Johnson Forest in combination with their experiences inside the party, it was not surprising that the membership would have chosen to leave. What is remarkable, though, is the thought and effort poured into ensuring that their philosophical foundations and political line were thoroughly and consistently worked out prior to joining the Socialist Workers Party.

Although perhaps not immediately apparent to the reader, this period also represents tremendous growth for Dunayevskaya as a leader within the Tendency. The decision to send her to the World Congress was an important one and offered a series of very unique opportunities for a woman leader at the time. Her energy and enthusiasm are immediately apparent in the letters from Europe and her constant focus on merging philosophy with practice is apparent in each "chance" encounter and meeting she attended and reported on. It also cannot be overlooked that in the eyes of the Fourth International, even if the name "Johnsonism" was invoked, the representative "on the floor" was a woman. Thus, we can infer that at the same time as Dunayevskaya is actively "thinking" about youth as a key revolutionary force, she is, herself, embodying a new revolutionary subjectivity.

From a theoretical perspective, the 1947 break with the Workers Party is also important as it afforded the time for the Tendency to consolidate its thinking to date and to articulate its philosophy in a manner that was broadly directed to its members, workers, and other party comrades. The Socialist Workers Party could be under no illusion as to the inclination of Johnson Forest. In terms of state capitalist theory, we can also see a refinement that raises it to a new theoretical understanding of capitalism in general, freeing it from its previous association with the Russian Question. However, as clear as these statements are, and in spite of the Tendency invoking "the dialectic" in its critique of the Workers Party, the real philosophical work on dialectics will not begin until 1948-1949 and Dunayevskaya will not reach her "philosophical moment" until 1953. So, we are still left with a sense that the work that Tendency is engaged with was important, that they were making an important philosophical contribution to international Marxism, but the "glue" that will hold the theory together as a consistent philosophy is still present only in embryonic form. With this in mind it is to the beginning of the philosophic correspondence that we now turn.

Chapter Seven

Philosophy and Lenin

Introduction

The departure of the Johnson Forest tendency from the Workers Party opened the critical space to further develop its own political program and for its main theorists to embark on new philosophical studies with particular emphasis on Lenin, Hegel and Marx's *Capital*. The period of 1947 – 1953 was marked by key theoretical leaps for the Tendency in general and Dunayevskaya specifically. In particular, Dunayevskaya's archives identify the 1949 – 1951 exchanges between herself, James, and Boggs as important moments in her own philosophical development. In fact, it is through these letters in particular that we can witness Dunayevskaya's transition from reading Marx as an economist to reading Marx dialectically.[1] This Chapter and the next three Chapters will focus on the "philosophical correspondence" as recorded primarily through letters between James, Boggs and Dunayevskaya. Specifically, this Chapter will review correspondence between September 1948 and May 1949. Chapter Eight examines the correspondence of June – August 1949 and Chapter Nine examines correspondence, key pamphlets, and presentation notes between August 1949 and January 1951. Where appropriate, these Chapters will also relate moments of intellectual discovery to the political work of the Johnson Forest tendency and the "objective" conditions that provided the context and backdrop for the political commitments and organizational work of the Tendency.[2] As a meshing of the philosophical and the historical can be difficult to achieve, the next four Chapters will develop chronologically, identifying important themes and discoveries as they emerged. The entire philosophical correspondence that spanned 1948 - 1953 contained various letters and reports which included hundreds of typed and hand-written pages and revealed innumerable ideas, themes and arguments. The aim here is not to "disclose" the contents of each letter or document, but to draw together the ideas that are most salient to Dunayevskaya's philosophical growth.

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[1] "Reading dialectically" holds two meanings here. On the one hand, Dunayevskaya's familiarity with Hegel allowed her to "see" Marx's application of dialectics in *Capital* and to trace the progression of Marx's thought which culminated in that substantial work. On the other hand, Dunayevskaya also read Marx, Marxists, and objective world conditions dialectically. Arguably, it is this dual nature of her discoveries that makes her philosophical contribution unique.

In this Chapter we will most often return to discussions of the merits and weaknesses of Trotsky and Trotskyism and the historical and philosophical context of Lenin's post-1914 discoveries. The Chapter begins by briefly reviewing the first draft of a book outline, written by Dunayevskaya in 1947 and entitled "State Capitalism and Marxism". This draft serves as an excellent jumping-off point for consideration of the philosophical correspondence. After considering the key elements of the book outline, the Chapter will begin reviewing the exchange of letters between the Tendency leadership between September 1948 – May 1949. The Chapter will close with an overview of core arguments and insights developed by Dunayevskaya in this brief period.

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[2] One of the most important objective world-conditions which will be identified by Dunayevskaya in this period related particularly to the introduction of automation and the resulting wildcat strikes among U.S. coalminers between 1949 – 1951. For a more recent discussion see: Peter Hudis, "Workers As Reason:The Development of a New Relation of Worker and Intellectual in American Marxist Humanism.," *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 4 (2003): p. 267 – 293.

Before turning to the discussion of the philosophical correspondence itself the importance of studying this period of Dunayevskaya's development primarily through exchanged letters and her presentation notes (which are also included in the archives) should be established. Previous Chapters have drawn more heavily from circulated essays and pamphlets. To a certain extent this is because these are the documents to which we have the greatest access for the earlier periods.[3] However, it is also the case that the exchanges in the form of letters primarily between 1949 – 1953 offer an "in the moment" glimpse into the key questions and philosophic orientations that would ground Dunayevskaya in later years in Marx's humanism. In other words, this "moment" in the philosopher's development stands as formative. To a large extent we can trace the core concern of each work in the trilogy of revolution to its embryonic form in the philosophical correspondence.[4] It is also significant that Dunayevskaya reapplied her discoveries from 1949 – 1953 to her own earlier works on the Russian economy to further deepen the theoretical insights of these documents in later published writings. The correspondence and intellectual work of this period, then, is the window to the moments and leaps that later consolidate into the philosophy of Marxist Humanism.

Contextualizing the Correspondence

Between 1947 and 1955, Johnson Forest undertook several projects with the goal of further developing their philosophical position, already growing out of the state capitalist analysis of the Russian counter-revolution. Following the Tendency's admission to the Socialist Workers Party in 1947, Dunayevskaya, James and Boggs set out to clarify the theoretical foundations of the Tendency's contributions to Marxism. From accounts found in archival documents, it is clear that the intention was to produce book-length, publishable works on elements of Lenin's Notebooks and state capitalism (including the studies of the Russian economy which have been discussed previously). The first draft of a book encountered in the archives is dated 1947 (prior to the correspondence under consideration in this chapter) and is entitled *State Capitalism and Marxism.*[5] This preliminary draft, intended to provide an outline of the major sections of the book for review by publishers and other interested parties, demonstrates the intellectual direction of Dunayevskaya's work at the close of her association with the Workers Party. In the introduction, Dunayevskaya adumbrated three "strands of thought" for the book: "... (1)the evolution of political economy in relation to the actual economic and social development [sic]; (2) the evolution of Marxism in the light of events that helped develop its concepts; and (3) the application of Marxism to the current problems arising from the trend toward state capitalism and the necessity of creating full employment."[6] Thus, the book outline merged a historical treatment of Marx's thought with the contemporary debates initiated by economic works, such as Keynes and Marxist thinkers like Sweezy.[7] This "method" of reviewing the historical and philosophical development of texts combined with application to concrete/contemporary problems also defined the structure and development of the themes covered in the subsequent correspondence.

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[3] This being said, Dunayevskaya's correspondence with Trotsky, for example, is contained in the archives but was not discussed in a sustained way because these letters did not contain core philosophical ideas as did the letters of the 1949 – 1953 period and do not further our consideration of Dunayevskaya's development.

[4] "Trilogy of Revolution" refers to Dunayevskaya's primary published works. These were briefly discussed in Chapter One.

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[5] Archive #472. The archive entry for this title indicates that it is the "first draft" of what would become *Marxism and Freedom*, Dunayevskaya's 1958 book. More notable, however, is that this draft was reviewed by British economist Joan Robinson (although no date is specified for these comments) and submitted to Oxford University Press for consideration. In her autobiography, Grace Lee Boggs suggests that in the 1954 – 55 period, James believed that Dunayevskaya wanted to take the *Correspondence* organization underground in order to "write a book and 'leave the movement'". Boggs goes on to recount "CLR had been right on target when he said that Raya was eager to write a book. In 1958 her book *Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 until Today* appeared with an introduction by Herbert Marcuse" (Grace Lee Boggs, *Living For Change : an Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 100). Clearly, such an assertion ignores the historical record of the Johnson Forest tendency and creates an unfavourable sense of Dunayevskaya's ambition. What the archived materials reveal is that the work, some of the content of which reappeared in *Marxism and Freedom*, was the product of Dunayevskaya's intellectual work, documented and shared among her colleagues, from the earliest days of the Tendency.

Given this "method", the book outline serves as a useful overview of Dunayevskaya's treatment of Marx's economic theory and his relationship to political economy generally. Moreover, although *State Capitalism and Marxism* preceded the philosophical exchange between James, Boggs and Dunayevskaya, there is a definite Hegelian feel to the text that was not generally present in Dunayevskaya's earlier writings. For example, in her discussion of Marx's method, Dunayevskaya wrote:

> The *contradictions* [within capitalist production] are seen to render the system apart, and make it impossible for it to continue. The *negation of the negation* is seen to contain a new affirmation: the socialization of labour and the development, instead of the alienation, of the activity of man as the basis of the new society. Marxism incorporates into the science of economics, *the subjective element*, the labourer, the gravedigger of bourgeois society.[8]

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[6] Archive #473.

[7] For example: John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (Harcourt, Brace & Co: 1935) or Paul Marlor Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development; Principles of Marxian Political Economy* (New York : Modern Reader, 1968).

[8] Archive #482, italics added.

On the preceding page of the text, Dunayevskaya carefully identified Hegel as the source of Marx's dialectic method. Although difficult to decipher, Joan Robinson's marginalia questioned if such "Hegelianism" was necessary.[9] Clearly, Dunayevskaya's sense of the importance of Marx's relationship to the Hegelian dialectic was not shared among economists (Marxists or otherwise) at the time.[10]

While this draft outlined Dunayevskaya's key insights in regard to Marx's *Capital*, the document's conclusions are far less developed and more tentative than what appeared in the "Invading Socialist Society" or what appeared in the later work *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950). In this sense "State Capitalism and Marxism" is a transitory document in Dunayevskaya's philosophical development. It effectively demonstrated the consolidation of Dunayevskaya's theoretical studies up to this point. It is from here that the Johnson Forest tendency embarked on a more detailed study of key philosophical works that will lead to the subtle, yet dramatic, reorientation in Dunayevskaya's own theory and approach to the question of practicing emancipatory politics.

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[9] In 1942 Robinson had published *An Essay on Marxian Economics*, which is listed in the Bibliography of *Marxism and Freedom* and whose work is referenced in a footnote. See: Joan Robinson, *An Essay on Marxian Economics* (2nd ed, London: St. Martins, 1966).

[10] Not surprisingly, this time period corresponds to the publication of Sweezy's *The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy* (1942) which took up the so-called "transformation problem" between Volume I and III of *Capital*. It is also not surprising that Sweezy's text references Hegel only twice, and certainly not in the context of being the source of Marx's dialectical structure in *Capital* (in fact, neither dialectics or materialism or alienation are indexed in the book). Moreover, this anti-Hegelian interpretation of Marx reaches full status in the works of Louis Althusser, for a discussion see essay on "overdetermination". See: Louis Althusser. "Contradiction and Overdetermination." Web page, 1962 [accessed 5 June 2005]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/works/formarx/althuss1.htm.

One additional comment needs to be made before proceeding to an examination of the philosophical correspondence itself. Much of the material that the Johnson Forest tendency drew upon for the purposes of their discussions was not generally available in English translation at the time. Most notably, Boggs translated Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in 1947,[11] while Dunayevskaya provided translations of Lenin's notes on Hegel (originally written in Russian) from which James drew much of his *Notes on Dialectics* (1948).[12] Thus, the collaboration between these thinkers not only extended Hegel, Marx, and Lenin in terms of revolutionary philosophy, but there was also a concerted attempt to make available key Marxist works to a broader audience—first, within the Tendency and the Socialist Workers Party and later through more broadly distributed pamphlets and Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*.

The Philosophical Correspondence

In her autobiography, Boggs recounted the intellectual synergy that existed between herself, James and Dunayevskaya:

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[11] The Johnson Forest tendency published this translation with the other documents during their "interim period" while awaiting membership in the Socialist Workers Party. Again, as Boggs recounts: "Raya spent hours in the New York Public Library reading the collected works of Marx and Engles in Russian, while I bought and pored over the fourteen-volume set in German. …I will never forget the day that Raya came back from the library with the news that she had found a Russian translation of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* written by Marx in 1843-44… . Unknown in the United States at the time, these essays make it unmistakably clear that Marx's overriding concern was the human essence of the workers, not property relations." (Boggs, p. 58). Interestingly, Bertell Ollman noted that he used this translation (published under Boggs' pseudonym Ria Stone) among others for his work: Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society.* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. vii.

[12] Dunayevskaya included an appendix to her first book, *Marxism and Freedom*, her own translation of some of portions of the 1844 Manuscripts and the commentary sections of Lenin's Notebooks. See: Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: a Critical Study* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 217 for discussion.

> CLR, Raya, and I were inseparable. In today's New York the sight of us together – a tall, handsome black man flanked by two women, one a somewhat stooped and scholarly Jew and the other a round-faced Asian—might not attract much attention. But in the 1940s a lot of people must have wondered where we came from and what we were about… .
>
> Our energy was fantastic. We would spend a morning or afternoon writing, talking, and eating and then go home and write voluminous letters to one another extending or enlarging what we had discussed, sending these around to other members of our tendency in barely legible carbon copies.[13]

By 1948, the Tendency was forced to rely on written correspondence as James departed New York for Nevada in order to seek a recognized divorce from his first wife.[14] James' authored his *Notes* during this time, but he also engaged (although, as Dunayevskaya notes later, infrequently) in the philosophical discussions initiated primarily by Dunayevskaya but also by Boggs.[15] Dunayevskaya's archives identify the core period of philosophical discussions as 1949 – 1951; however, by examining other correspondence in the archives, it is more appropriate to start with the letters in 1948 as this was the beginning of an intensive period of study and translation for Dunayevskaya.

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[13] Boggs, pp. 60 – 61.

[14] James, Webb and Grimshaw, p. 12.

[15] Dunayevskaya, Raya Dunayevskaya, *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (Chicago: News & Letters Publication, 1980), p. 2. This was republished in 1989 as *1953 as 'A New Divide within Marxism'*, a pre-plenum discussion bulletin, July 1989, pagination as in original. I should note that I am careful to avoid sources written after the conclusion of the Johnson Forest tendency breakup simply to avoid making arguments that are not based in the nature and content of the discussions as they occurred contemporaneously. Of course, it is not possible to read this material without also consulting Dunayevskaya's own assessments of it and the breakup of the Johnson Forest tendency.

September – November 1948

Our consideration of the philosophical nature of the Johnson Forest tendency correspondence begins with September 14, 1948. At this point the Tendency had already decided to produce a work on Lenin's post-1914 "transformation" which resulted from his serious study of Hegel's *Science of Logic* and other works. Given Dunayevskaya's focus on the dialectical structure of *Capital* in her 1947 book outline, we can assume that these discussions were initiated much earlier than 1948. As noted in a previous chapter, James outlined as early as 1944 the desire to produce a definitive work on dialectical materialism.[16] In fact, this period of philosophical writing marks the first sustained transition in Dunayevskaya's writing with regard to Hegel; for example, note that in her 1943 article defending James' "Production for the Sake of Production", she had backed away from making comment on Hegel directly and instead only referenced Marx's relationship to Hegel:

> I make no pretense at being able to expound Hegel and hence had originally not intended to take issue with the section by Carter on Hegel, although I categorically disagreed with his interpretation. However, my judgment was not so much due to my small knowledge of Hegel's works as to what I know of the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin on Hegel.[17]

Her outline for *State Capitalism and Marxism* also related Hegel's method to Marx; however, Dunayevskaya's subsequent correspondence extended the study of Hegel on the grounds that it was necessary to study Hegel in order to understand the philosophical failures of post-Marx Marxism.

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[16] James, Webb and Grimshaw, p. 163.
[17] Archive #189.

Although the Tendency had already published the "Balance Sheet" on Trotskyism and the Workers Party, in September 1948 Dunayevskaya returned to a consideration of Trotsky's historical development – this time with an eye to distinguishing Lenin's political development from Trotsky's. The underlying assessment, already present in this letter, was that Trotsky (or Luxemburg, for that matter) was not inclined to expect a real proletariat revolution. Why? Because ultimately Trotsky was still enmeshed in petty-bourgeois ideology – one that placed the intellectual over the worker. As Dunayevskaya recounted: "In the period between revolutions, the record [of Trotsky] so far as we have it is purely journalistic, see the fruition of his theories in a series of slogans, all of which are wrong… ."[18] Being unable to anticipate the proletarian revolution (in either theory or practice) left Trotsky unprepared for the resulting state overthrow in 1917; it also opened the space for advocating "planning" in place of workers' democracy. In other words, the counter-revolution was born at the moment of the successful revolution. While Stalinism moved the counter-revolution forward, Trotsky's emphasis on planning fed the regression:

> We finally come to the mature LT [Leon Trotsky], the victorious October, the real dictatorship of the proletariat, in a situation where the revolution was to have 'liquidated all differences,' – and what does the petty-bourgeois Trotsky display now? Precisely what he displayed in 1905: with only the difference that what the intellectuals were to have done for the proletariat then, the state administrators are to do for the proletariat now. And the proletariat itself? Militarization of labour, it is found is not an accident but 'the necessary stage in the transition to Communism'! And why: because we have advanced to the stage where this proletariat can plan.[19]

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[18] Archive #1327.
[19] Archive #1327, underlining in original.

By tracing Trotsky's politics from the 1905 period to post-1917, Dunayevskaya demonstrated Trotsky's own theoretical weaknesses. This took her previous break from Trotskyism to a deeper theoretical level that suggested state capitalism was not imposed following the death of Lenin, but was inherent in the mistaken theoretical understanding of the revolution's leaders, particularly Trotsky.[20]

Again, in October 1948, Dunayevskaya returned to her assessment of Trotsky, this time drawing in a criticism of Luxemburg as well. She noted: "…for all the seeming oppositeness of her spontaneity and LT's Plan, they are in actuality similars... ."[21] In other words, both Trotsky and Luxemburg were developing their (different) political analyses and programs without due attention to the actual organization of the masses themselves. Contrary to the approach of Trotsky or Luxemburg, Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin from the start was attentive to the pitfalls of ignoring the masses and imposing centralized planning in an attempt to realize socialism. Moreover, Dunayevskaya drew Lenin's analysis forward to the rise of fascism typified not merely by Hitler's Germany but also Stalin's Russia. As she noted: "Lenin 'rejects' the plan because either the proletariat 'to a man' will do it, or the state machine, whether in proletariat or capitalist hands, will travel in a direction 'god only knows where' – it was the barbarism of fascism we were to see a decade after the defeat of 1923."[22] Speaking directly to Lenin's "April Theses" of 1917, Dunayevskaya recounted: "Anyone who thinks the April Theses is a 'coming over' to the Trotskyist conception of the permanent revolution has read too much of Trotsky and not enough 'statistics' either of production or the measure of the proletariat."[23]

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[20] Natalia Trotsky, after Trotsky's death, held that following Trotsky's analysis of the "revolution betrayed" to its logical end would lead to a state capitalist analysis. Dunayevskaya's assessment certainly contradicted such an assumption given Trotsky's flawed sense of the revolutionary role of the proletariat and the state. In her resignation from the Fourth International, Natalia Trotsky wrote: "Time and again, he [Trotsky] pointed out how the consolidation of Stalinism in Russia led to the worsening of the economic, political, and social positions of the working class… . If this trend continues, he said, the revolution will be at an end and the restoration of capitalism will be achieved. That, unfortunately, is what has happened even if in new and unexpected forms" (Natalia Sedova Trotsky. "Resignation from the Fourth International." Web page, May 1951 [accessed 4 April 2005]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/sedova-natalia/1951/05/09.htm, p. 2 of 4 fulltext). Dunayevskaya reported an earlier conversation with Natalia in July 1946 in which Dunayevskaya rejected this assessment of Trotsky: "Though she [Natalia] now thinks the conquests of October are gone, and Russia is no longer a workers state, the line as it was left by Trotsky was being defended by Cannon. With a different line, it was possible to have seen capitalism in Russia before 1946. Though my main point is to change that line now, it is necessary to state that Trotsky himself did not see the capitalist laws of development in Russia" (Archive #728). Interestingly, though, it is not until the September 1948 letter that we see Dunayevskaya break from Trotsky completely. In a January 1947 letter to Natalia, Dunayevskaya stressed the opposite: "I wish, first of all, to separate myself from the critics such as those expounding the official Workers Party line who, in breaking with Trotsky's analysis of Russia broke, I think, with a great deal of Trotskyism. The severity of my criticism of Trotsky's analysis was, on the other hand, induced precisely by the fact that I wish only to change the Russian line but to retain the revolutionary heritage he left us – his perspectives of world revolution, of revolutionary strategy, tactics and politics – for me Trotskyism is 20th century Marxism-Leninism. …There is only one point in your letter that I found unkind, and that was your reference to my 'emancipation'. No, Natalia, I do not think I am 'emancipated,' nor do I wish to emancipate myself from Trotskyism" (Archive #733) .

The October 1948 correspondence was the last time that Dunayevskaya would specifically address Trotsky in terms of his commitment to "the plan" or his understanding of how to organize a socialist society. What clearly emerged from these two letters was that Trotsky's contribution to realizing revolution and building a post-revolution society pales in light of Lenin's contributions post-1914. Dunayevskaya concluded her letter by announcing that Trotsky's "Lessons of October" are merely "tales told out of school" rather than important or insightful "lessons".[24] In a sense, this conclusion with regard to Trotsky freed Dunayevskaya to pursue the full meaning of Lenin's work outside the confines of what was seen to be authorized by Trotskyism.[25] As a Tendency, the complete break with Trotskyism, particularly as articulated by the Fourth International, became clear with the final break with the Socialist Workers Party in 1951. For Dunayevskaya the final ties to Trotskyism were cut when the Tendency itself split between Dunayevskaya and James.

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[21] Archive #1330.

[22] Archive #1330.

[23] Archive #1331. The "April Theses" are included in Volume 24 of Lenin's *Collected Works*, under the title "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution". These "Theses" were read by Lenin April 4, 1917 to two meetings of the All-Russia Conference of Soviet Workers' and Soliders' Deputies. Anderson, quoting Robert Service, notes: " 'Most surprisingly, Lenin made no mention of the organization of industry under the proposed socialist regime. ... Nothing about central planning, except for a very general plea for soviet control "over social production and exchange of products." ... He focused on politics and on the soviets as the centre of political life.'" (Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism*, p. 153).

These foreshadowings aside, Dunayevskaya continued to pursue her "philosophic" training vigorously. By mid-November 1948, she reported to James that it was "thrilling" typing his notes on dialectics. In addition to typing his hand-written notes, she further reported that she had added the relevant passages from Hegel so others in the Tendency could read the document more easily. But, in the course of recording her work, Dunayevskaya also noted that she had hit upon a hypothesis:

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[24] Archive #1332.

[25] The importance of this "break" with Trotsky should not be under-estimated, although it lacks the "high drama" of Dunayevskaya's 1939 break. The significance of her analysis of Trotsky is further confirmed by James' September 20, 1948 letter to Constance Webb in which he noted: "By the way, this same letter of R's [Dunayevskaya] contains three pages of analysis and some extract on L.T. Anything more unlike G's [Grace Lee Boggs] you never saw. It is close, tight, concrete, in order, pulled like a bow. You have to look twice and more often to see that very few, I doubt if *any* of L.T.'s followers from 1928, except those in Russia, could do anything like it. It is sweeping thru' three decades, but never seems 'to make any jumps'. It is wonderful stuff really" (James, Webb and Grimshaw, p. 337).

> I ventured out with a hypothesis – it must have been one of those plunges where you land with your head on the cold concrete since I have not had comment from Grace as to my brazenness. Here is what it was. Comparing the contents of the two Logics, and that of the French edition of Marx's Accumulation, I though that in either case it might not be just to make it easier for the reader[26]... but that there might be a logic to the different approaches. Since in the Smaller and later Logic Hegel includes his conclusions plunk in the beginning, Preliminary Notion, I felt that although you might not be able to get the concrete truth in all its richness until after you have gone through the whole dialectic with him stage by stage, nevertheless he might be willing to introduce you in a preliminary way to his conclusions, once you were acquainted with the Introduction or past history of philosophy. In the case of Marx, once you got the basic principles and movement.[27]

This specific hypothesis goes by uncommented by either Boggs or James; however, even as sparsely laid out in this brief letter, Dunayevskaya's eagerness to engage Hegel on a variety of levels and to apply Hegel to Marx is very much apparent. In a subsequent note to Boggs, which we will address more fully in a moment, Dunayevskaya recorded: "You have no idea what Jimmie's Notes on Dialectics have accomplished – they have literally released thousands of little self-creating germs … which pop all over my head and expand every old idea to such new heights, that it begins to look like I understood nothing before."[28]

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[26] Hegel does address the structure of the *Science of Logic*, for example, noting: "...I would point out that the divisions and heading of the books, sections and chapters given in this work as well as the explanations associated with them, are made to facilitate a preliminary survey and strictly are only of *historical* value. They do not belong to the content and body of the science but are compilations of an external reflection which has already run through the whole of the exposition and consequently knows and indicates in advance the sequence of its moments before these are brought forward by the subject matter itself" (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*; Muirhead Library of Philosophy (London, New York: Allen & Unwin; Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 54-5).

[27] Archive #9209. Marx's "Accumulation" refers to Part VII of *Capital, volume I*. Contrast this to a Dunayevskaya's 1962 reflection: "In a discussion with John last Sunday, he asked, 'What, then, were 'J's great contributions' even in the creative period, 1941-1950?' To which I suddenly replied, 'Nothing but leftwing Trotskyism.' 'Even the state-capitalist theory?' "Yes, in the sense that it could have been accepted by Trotsky – and Trotskyists from Tony Cliff to Natalia since have. Indeed this and this alone can explain why we remained in the Trotskyist movement a solid decade after elaboration of state-capitalist theory..." (Archive #9629).

January – May 1949

The exchange of letters resumes in January 1949, initiating one of the most productive years of collaboration among the Tendency's leadership. The archives from this period include 38 letters, the majority of which are penned by (or are a response to) Dunayevskaya. The themes, topics, and philosophical questions covered in these letters were expansive; rather than attempt to impose a false order, what follows is a chronological account of the letters that defined the interactions between the leadership of the Johnson Forest tendency in 1949. What becomes apparent through a sustained engagement with these letters is that Dunayevskaya's philosophical appreciation of Marx and Lenin was significantly increased by exploring the historical context of each philosopher and the Hegelian dialectic as it was utilized in their works. Further, the reader will find in these letters a sustained philosophical engagement that pushed the Tendency to recast its analysis dialectically, searching for moments of capitalism's self-movement through negation.

Dunayevskaya began the year with a letter to Boggs in which she proposed that they collaborate on an article on *Capital*. She suggested a "dialectically" concrete title: "The Significance of *Capital* for Our Day".[29] Dunayevskaya went on to detail how her new insight into the dialectical method had freed her from the "violent abstraction" to rise to true abstraction.[30] She provided, here for the first time, an example drawn from her own critique of Rosa Luxemburg.[31] Where her analysis had previously focused on Luxemburg's failure to ground her argument in production and instead had focused on the market and consumption, she now argued that Luxemburg's error was the result of her substituting imperialism (the "fixed particular") for capitalism (the true "universal").

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[28] Archive #9210.

[29] Notably, Dunayevskaya was very particular in this letter indicating that she did not feel that James needed to be directly involved; "…I want us to do this thing on our own"

(Archive #9210). I am not suggesting that this is notable because it foreshadows the upcoming split in the Tendency *per se*, but more so to highlight that the letters considered here do mark a "coming into her own" for Dunayevskaya. There is a definite confidence that underlies Dunayevskaya's philosophical discoveries that we catch glimpses of in comments such as that recorded above.

[30] The use of terms "concrete" and "abstract" almost appear counter-intuitive to the current-day reader. In their work on value theory, McGlone and Kliman draw a nice distinction between these terms that I think applies well to Dunayevskaya's work: "Marx inherited the usage of *concrete* (complex unity of diverse elements) and *abstract* (separated from this complex unity) from prior philosophers, Hegel especially. During the past generation, however, discussions of Marx's concepts of concrete and abstract labour have often discarded these meanings. All too often, 'concrete labour' now seems to be construed as 'work that workers actually do', so that 'abstract labour' becomes ineffable, something other than what workers do, but still somehow a kind of labour. This and other changes of usage have greatly exacerbated the confusion surrounding Marx's concepts" ("The Duality of Labour", in Alan Freeman, Andrew Kliman, and Julian Wells, *The New Value Controversy and the Foundations of Economics* (Cheltenham; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004), p. 135).

[31] Dunayevskaya's engagement with Luxemburg was sustained throughout the 1940s and early 1950s; although a lengthy treatment of Luxemburg was not realized until her final book was published in 1982. Her first published piece on Luxemburg was a letter to the Editor of the *New International* in response to a review of a biography of Luxemburg (see Archive #434). This letter focused on Luxemburg's *Accumulation*. Subsequently, in 1946, Dunayevskaya published a two-part article in the *New International* entitled "Luxemburg's Theory of Accumulation: How it Differed with Marx and Lenin" and "Part II – Luxemburg's Theory of Accumulation: Market, Crises and the Breakdown of Capitalism" (see Archive #436, 441). As we have seen referenced in other writings, Dunayevskaya believed that Luxemburg had failed to understand the centrality of production and had instead focused on consumption as the driving force of capitalism, as she noted in 1946: "For Marxism it is production which determines the market. Luxemburg, on the other hand, finds herself in a position where, although she accepts Marxism, she yet makes the market determine production" (Archive #439).

Although not further developed in this letter, Dunayevskaya was arguing that the "elevation" of imperialism to a new, totalizing system meant that Luxemburg failed to recognize how capitalist laws of development continued to operate, even in an era of imperialism. Significantly, this conclusion did not negate Dunayevskaya's previous critique of Luxemburg's *Accumulation*, but it more securely rooted her analysis in Marx's dialectical method without reverting to a weak (or dogmatic) assertion of "because Marx said so!" or that the "laws of capitalism were inexorable".

Dunayevskaya moved on in the letter to sketch out what could be included in the collaborative work she was proposing. Notably, and for the first time, she very directly argued that in order to write about *Capital* the *1844 Manuscripts* must be kept "in the back of our minds". She further noted:

> It seems to me that what has been happening is that the early economic manuscripts and the concept of the alienation of labour have attracted, to the little extent that they are alive in America, the sectarians. Marcuse who tried to get them out of the sectarian context and show that alienation of labour was not a mere humanitarian 'adjunct' to his 'real' economic theories fell far short of the task because he did not... use the dialectic concretely, by dialectically combining that is the concept of alienation with the actual economic laws of production analyzed by Marx.[32]

Putting aside the critique of Marcuse, what emerged here was a very specific understanding of the role or place of alienation—that is, the alienated worker-- in both Marx's analysis of capitalist production as a social form of organization. Further,

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[32] Archive #9211. In an interesting twist of history, it is Marx's economic theories that were subsequently "erased" from academe. Freeman *et. al.* argue, "Nevertheless, the theory and concepts from which Marx's insights stem are deemed unmentionable in economics. ...In standard undergraduate courses in virtually every liberal arts or social science subject other than economics, Marx has a place. He is treated as a theorist whose views should at least be known, even if only to reject them. In economics he is not merely rejected: his ideas are simply not to be found" (Freeman, Kliman, Wells, p. x).

Dunayevskaya was very alive to the impact of her conclusion about alienation on the generally accepted truisms of her contemporary Marxist economists; as she wrote: "The minute we try to show alienation and value as equivalents, we will be sat upon by the underconsumptionists for the economist tendency is much more potent factor in the movement than is the sectarian."[33]

Dunayevskaya concluded this letter by also suggesting that attention must be paid to the various drafts of *Capital*; however, this was not raised as a matter of protecting the historical record. Quite the contrary, Dunayevskaya's intention was to demonstrate Marx's own process of developing and deepening his dialectical approach to capitalist production. As a result, Dunayevskaya initiated a two-fold process: one of developing Marx's dialectic as a way to understand post-war capitalism; and, the second, reading the historical emergence of that dialectic dialectically. This dual approach becomes particularly apparent as she closed this letter on "preliminaries" by asking Boggs about the "permissibility" of

> …calling the part on Accumulation of Capital the Notion… What do you think? Remember that in the Accumulation he [Marx] summarizes Vol. II, telling us not to get dazzled by the milliard transactions of individuals, and thus tells us that where in Vol. I he dealt with the individual capital, Vol. II will deal with social capital, and then he summarizes Vol. III by connecting the lot of workers with the organic composition of capital, and if the accumulation of capital and the degradation of the worker is not the complete unity of absolute idea plus practice, then I do not know where else you would find so concrete a notion of capitalism.[34]

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[33] Archive #9211.
[34] Archive #9212.

And, finally she related all of the preceding discussion to the politics of the moment, concluding: "We live where Vol. III is the problem, but we must remember, as I mentioned earlier, that whereas in the [19]30s the underconsumptionists were the enemy, in the [19]40s it is the planners. That is because the problem of our age being statification of production and statification of the proletariat, both the Stalinist 'bureaucrat' and the labour bureaucrat are all readying plan to suppress the revolutionary proletariat."[35]

At the end of January, Dunayevskaya forwarded extracts of Lenin's Notebooks concerning Hegel's *History of Philosophy* to James. In her covering letter, Dunayevskaya highlighted for James the elements of Lenin's engagement with Hegel that defined Lenin's understanding of dialectics – and which explained why Trotskyism finds itself "theoretically stuck" on the question of Russia. Although the letter spans only two pages, the commentary on the dialectic and Trotskyism bears quoting at some length:

> And he [Lenin] proceeds to work out these two determinations of the dialectic ('pure movement of thought in Notion', and 'in the objective existence we see the contradiction which has in itself, or dialectic proper') which can be summed up, I think, in his statement that dialectic 'proper' means seeing contradiction not only in appearance but in essence. That is easy enough to see when it is applied to capitalism: we know there is contradiction not only in commodities – use –v and v, but in value itself – concrete and abstract labour.[36]

In other words, the presence of "the negative" or "the contradiction" was not a distinction of "form" vs. "essence" but was, as Dunayevskaya already suggested in her 1947 book outline, the "interpenetration of opposites"[37] such that the appearance and the essence are intimately related.[38] Dunayevskaya continued:

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[35] Archive #9212.
[36] Archive #9213.

> But when it comes to applying this same principle to revolution, we shy away from this contradiction in essence, and wish to fight only capitalism. ... Trotskyism has gotten particularly stuck there since the Stalinists are 'for' revolution – and so, they merely can say but they are not 'really' for while the Trotskyites are 'really' for, instead of getting a different notion-determination of revolution... .[39]

Building on her own insights and translations of Lenin's Notebooks, Dunayevskaya pressed further her attempt to apply Hegel's categories to *Capital.*[40] The February correspondence, again primarily between Dunayevskaya and Boggs, began with Dunayevskaya taking up Hegel's analysis of the "infinite in the finite".[41] As she recounted:

> Hegel's analysis of the 'infinite in the finite' because it is really the infinite that is real, and Lenin's emphasis on the profundity of the

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[37] Archive #481.
[38] One can certainly extend this observation to a strong critique of Engels' notion of "false consciousness" which demonstrates Engels' weak understanding of Marx's method.
[39] Archive #9213
[40] In Chapter Nine we will return to a re-reading of *Capital*. While Dunayevskaya was obviously attempting to read Marx via Hegel, it is, I think, more the case that she is reading Hegel via Marx at this point. Certainly, her own sense of discovery and confidence increase over the next several years of theoretical work.
[41] Hegel introduces this in *Science of Logic*, Chapter two, "Determinate Being". In her January 1949 correspondence, Dunayevskaya had suggested that Parts I and II of Vol. I of *Capital* are drawn from Hegel's discussion of Being. Hegel's opening to chapter two offers a sense of Dunayevskaya's direction: "In considering determinate being the emphasis falls on its determinate character; the determinateness is in the form of *being*, and as such it is *quality*. Through its quality, something is determined as opposed to an other, as *alterable* and *finite*; and as negatively determined not only against an other but also in its own self. This its negation as at first opposed to the finite something is the *infinite*; the abstract opposition in which these determinations appear resolves itself into the *infinity* which is free from the opposition, into *being-for-self*" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 109).

> transformation of the ideal into the real have clarified for me the place of crises, as the Actuality, rather than the Notion (which is Law of Accumulation which includes in crises the degradation of the worker)[42], of capitalist production.
>
> Consider this: when the ideal of capitalism – infinite production – becomes the reality, then we have complete chaos – 1929. Marx did this for us theoretically when he showed that the planned production of Vol. II ended in the general contradiction of capitalism in Vol. III. Hence we must now analyze plan and chaos not only as no true opposites (except of course where it is a class question), but as inseparable moments of the general contradiction of capitalism.[43]

Dunayevskaya was not satisfied by merely asserting the relationship of Hegel's "Real Actuality" to Marx but demonstrated concretely her argument by turning to Volume III of *Capital* for an examination of the decline in the rate of profit. Again, it is valuable to read her own account:

> ...take Marx in Vol. III...where he states the law of the decline in the rate of profit as promoting at one and the same time, concentration of capital, and overproduction, speculation, crisis, surplus-capital with surplus population. Then the very difficult and crucial definition of 'the general contradiction of capitalism'. ...In this context reconsider his statement that the peculiar barrier

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[42] NB. It is interesting that this treats the crises of volume I differently from the crises of volume III – Sweezy suggested that Marx had inconsistent definitions/treatments of crises; however, Dunayevskaya's approach would instead suggest that the difference for Marx is the focus on class relations rather than some definitional inconsistency. Dunayevskaya addressed this difference in her subsequent letter of February 10, 1949, she noted: "In working this out, will you tell me whether it isn't true that the being, or commodity, of Capital, first chapter, isn't different from being, or profit, of Capital Vol. III and therefore whether III isn't existence ~~as~~ contrasted to or "expansion" of being" (Archive #9219).

[43] Archive #9216. The reference to Lenin here is from Lenin's Notebooks, in which he observes: "The thought of the ideal passing into the real is *profound*: very important for history. But also in the personal life of man it is clear that this contains much truth. Against vulgar materialism. NB. The difference of the ideal from the material is also not unconditional, not *überschwenglich* [inordinate]" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 114).

> testifies to the finiteness and the historical, merely transitory character of capitalist production. (my emphasis)[44]

Thus, Dunayevskaya concluded that planning and chaos were not opposites but inseparable elements, both of which were present under capitalist social relations – in fact, both were necessary if capitalism was to realize its "historical mission" of revolutionizing production. To further "prove" her assessment of plan and chaos, Dunayevskaya closed this letter by tracing out the "historical emergence" of planning in both the United States and the USSR and the unifying feature of both: the "complete degradation of the worker."[45]

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[44] Archive #9216, underlining in original. The references here are primarily to Karl Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume III: The Process of Capitalist Production As a Whole* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1909), pp. 292-293. It reads as follows: "The periodical depreciation of the existing capital, which is one of the immanent means of capitalist production by which the fall in the rate of profit is checked and the accumulation of capital-value through the formation of new capital promoted, disturbs the existing conditions, within which the process of circulation and reproduction of capital takes place, and is therefore accompanied by sudden stagnations and crises in the process of production. ...

The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself. It is the fact that capital and its self-expansion appear as the starting and closing point, as the motive and aim of production that production is merely production for *capital*, and not vice versa, the means of production merely means for an ever expanding system of the life process for the benefit of the *society* of producers. The barriers, within which the preservation and self-expansion of the value of capital resting on the expropriation and pauperization of the great mass of producers can alone move, these barriers come continually in collision with the methods of production, which capital must employ for its purposes, and which steer straight toward an unrestricted extension of production, toward production for its own self, toward an unconditional development of the productive forces of society. The means, this unconditional development of the productive forces of society, comes continually into conflict with the limited end, the self-expansion of existing capital. Thus, while the capitalist mode of production is one of the historical means by which the material forces of production are developed and the world-market required for them created, it is at the same time in continual conflict with this historical task and the conditions of social production corresponding to it."

[45] Archive #9217.

Dunayevskaya's subsequent letter to Boggs (February 10, 1949) again turned to Hegel's discussion of Determinate Being and its relation to *Capital*; in this instance, specifically to Vol. III. Rather than introduce this as a point of discussion, however, Dunayevskaya was seeking Boggs' help in "transposing" the section of Hegel on "Barrier and Ought" to *Capital*. She was quite specific in terms of the application to *Capital*, however, directing attention to the relationship between the "general contradiction" and the "so-called last cause of all crises."[46] At first blush, Marx's assertion that consumption was the last cause of all crises would seem to support the underconsumptionist interpretation that Dunayevskaya had been opposing now for nearly ten years; however, she by turning to Hegel she instead argued:

> One of the limits of capitalist production is the consumption of the proletariat paid at value. That is the alpha and the omega of the underconsumptionists. But the real barrier says Marx is capital itself. Now heretofore we have used the terms practically interchangeably; underconsumptionists saying it is consumption and the decline in rate of profit theorists saying, no it is capital; but neither side made any distinction between limit and barrier.[47]

Dunayevskaya suggested that it was the distinction between limit and barrier that revealed the self-limiting contradiction of capitalism and allowed Marx to conceptualize the realization of a new society; however, the letter remained somewhat tentative in its assertion, lacking the concrete application of Hegel's categories that are much more apparent in later letters and formal presentations. Not surprisingly, one of Boggs' first comments in response to these letters was to suggest "slowing down". Yet not more than seven days from her first letter on barrier and limit, and only four days after receiving Boggs' response, Dunayevskaya was ready to press her point further, this time with more confidence, although, she wrote that her hope was that her assertions do not appear "brazen".

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[46] This is a reference to Vol. III in which Marx wrote: "The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as compared to the tendency of capitalist production to develop the productive forces in such a way, that only the absolute power of consumption of the entire society would be their limit." (Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume III: The Process of Capitalist Production As a Whole* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1909, p. 568).
[47] Archive #9218.

She began the letter by agreeing with Boggs' caution:

> Naturally we must be very wary before we rush to fill the logical categories of Hegel with specific class content, and it is surely true that the 'ought and the Barrier' of the Determinate Being which fit capitalist production are rather due to the fact that that is one of the forms of determinate being than to the fact the dialectic of the specific contradictions of capitalist [sic] is akin to the dialectic of determinate being.[48]

However, with this acknowledgement out of the way, she pushed for a reading of Hegel that was also historically concrete and that reached beyond Marx's own (historical) limitation:

> But that [Hegel's failure to identify the dual nature of labour] never stopped Marx and the fact that he could not work out (I mean died before he could) the dialectic of crisis in as precise a manner as he had in commodities should not keep us from venturing forth.[49]

And, in "venturing forth" Dunayevskaya argued that limit and barrier could be fruitfully related to capitalism. She posited "limit" as something that established a boundary, but that could be transcended or passed. Barrier, conversely, "obstructs progress". However, thinking dialectically means that limit and barrier must be in some way related (not surprisingly, Hegel's discussion on barrier and limit is also closely linked to "ought" and

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[48] Archive #9222.
[49] Archive #9222.

"is"), and it was this inter-relationship that drew Dunayevskaya's attention. Dunayevskaya closed in on the central problem, arguing:

> The tendencies in capitalist production whose evolution result in the general contradiction are in constant struggle between the tendency to expand and the tendency to preserve the existing values. Our problem is when does the limit of underconsumptionism turn into the barrier of self-expansion?[50]

In other words, Dunayevskaya was posing the relationship between the "last cause of crises" and the "general contradiction of capitalism" dialectically. Consumption certainly poses a limit on capitalist expansion; however, the impossibility of continually realizing new value poses the final barrier to the capitalist mode of production. Thus we find that Marx's own language was quite specific when he used limit rather than barrier in identifying consumption as a cause of crises; moreover, note that Marx did not suggest that this "last real cause" of crises leads to the realization of a new mode of production.[51] Dunayevskaya did not, however, draw out these conclusions directly, but left them for further consideration as she and Boggs continued to develop their article on *Capital.* Surprisingly, Dunayevskaya did not revisit this argument again in the period under consideration. What did occur, though, was a refocusing on the falling rate of profit as surplus value, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine. However, the sense of consumption as a limit but not a barrier allowed Dunayevskaya to draw attention to production as the only "place" in which revolutionary change could alter the mode of production and realize a new society. Altering the "limit" was merely reformism or readjustment, but not revolution.

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[50] Archive #9223.

[51] See previous notes for Marx's actual text.

Lenin's Notebooks in Toto

In addition to her correspondence with Boggs, Dunayevskaya also wrote to James at the same time indicating that she had decided to translate Lenin's Notebooks on the *Science of Logic* "in toto". Her covering letter for the first section began with a subtle correction to James' *Notes on Dialectics*:

> Note that the Leap (translated by Hegel's translators as Jump) you made so famous in your Notes is not in Quality but in Measure. ...You will enjoy the notes on Being which you practically skipped over in your hurry to get to Essence.[52]

By the close of February 1949, Dunayevskaya forwarded her translation on Essence. Her obvious enjoyment at reading Lenin's Notebooks shines forth from this letter. It is within these Notes that Dunayevskaya found more than necessary justification for the work being undertaken by the Johnson Forest tendency; as she quoted from Lenin: " 'The continuation of the work of Hegel and Marx must consist in the dialectic working out of the history of human thought, science, and technique.' "[53] Moreover, the insights derived from Lenin's dialectical reading of history and thought was apparent when Lenin identified "self-movement" as the "core" of Hegelianism – that is that Hegel had to first make this discovery before Marx and others could expand it. From Lenin's Notebooks:

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[52] Archive #1597. Also, it is not surprising that Dunayevskaya would focus on this "correction" on the "leap" appearing in Measure. In her previous letter to Boggs, she included an "incidental word on laws: "At a 'lower' stage the moments of law could be identified as measure. What I am driving at is: if the moments of quality are being and non-being, and those of quality and quantity the measure of things, could we say that measure is a law of being and any one mechanically transposing that into essence and notion is so innocent of the contradictions of life, that his thinking has reverted to so primitive a stage that it can be compared with nothing higher than mythology... .?" (Archive #9223). One wonders if James' *Notes* were in the back of Dunayevskaya's mind here.

[53] Archive #1599.

"The idea of universal movement and change (1813 *Logic*) was conjecture before its application to life and society. In regard to society it was proclaimed earlier (1847) than it was demonstrated in application to man (1859)."[54] Dunayevskaya focused on this section from the Notebooks, highlighting for James Lenin's sense of interconnection, or as she put it, "universal development": "This can be seen in the three dates that he sets down for universal development: (1) 1813 – Science of Logic or the theory of development. (2) 1847 – the Communist Manifesto, or the application of dialectics to society. (3) 1859 – Origin of the Species, or application of dialectics to man."[55]

Dunayevskaya went on to discuss the three sections of the "Doctrine of Essence". It is here that she began to make the argument that *Imperialism* was the product of Lenin's newly gained appreciation of the dialectic. As she recounted:

> Naturally, he [Lenin] does not fail to underline that one-sided determinateness of Essence has no truth, but he emphasizes also (permit me to skip here): "Causality is ordinarily understood by us as only a small part of the universal connection, but (a materialistic addition) the small part is not subjective but the objectively real connection'. I could not help but feel that these 'small parts' which had 'objectively real connection' were the elements of the phenomena about him which became the book Imperialism.[56]

In later correspondence the relationship between Lenin's philosophical studies and *Imperialism* (as well as *State and Revolution*) was developed more fully by Dunayevskaya in preparation for a book manuscript.[57]

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[54] Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 141. Although not yet discussed in the letters, the movement of history as Lenin outlined it here followed the Hegelian movement of Universal-Particular-Individual.
[55] Archive #1599.
[56] Archive #1599.
[57] Archive #1735-1805.

Dunayevskaya closed the letter by returning to her previous desire to link the "general contradiction of capitalism" to Hegel's *Science of Logic*. She noted that both James and Lenin had focused on the Law of Contradiction in their studies. In this instance, the idea of self-movement was clarified in "that 'the principle of self-movement consists of nothing else but the exhibition of contradiction'".[58] One final note must be made with regard to the letter. Dunayevskaya did not simply attach the word "law" to contradiction but also highlighted Lenin's attempt to draw out a clear definition of "law" from Hegel. Lenin traced ten different usages of "law" which were paraphrased by Dunayevskaya for James: "But here Lenin stops himself to note: 'But further, although it is not clear, it is acknowledged, it seems….that law can overcome this inadequacy and grasp also the negative side, and [totality of appearance].'"[59] Dunayevskaya traced this back to what she believed was the key sentence from Hegel:

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[58] Archive #1600. The identification of contradiction as the source of movement was an incredible leap for Lenin; likewise, this "new way" of thinking about *Capital* was extremely important for Dunayevskaya. However, one is reminded that she is in the midst of discovery at this point, as is quite telling if we examine her full statement that was referenced above: "May I be permitted to linger a moment on Law of Contradiction, seeing that both Lenin and you considered it so much the essence of these as to quote it in toto? I however wish to limit myself only to its relationship to the general contradiction of capitalism. I began to harp on the applicability of parts of the dialectic to that general contradiction even when I was in the Doctrine of Being (Section on Ought and Barrier in relation to infinite production – production for production's sake that is)and now I find that Hegel notes … 'Infinity which is contradiction as it appears in the sphere of Being', and then moves rapidly on to demonstrate that 'the principle of self-movement consists of nothing else but the exhibition of contradiction'. Having moved that rapidly he concludes 'Motion is existent contradiction'. The emphasis is Lenin's and suits me perfectly for grappling with the law of motion of capitalist society in philosophical rather than in value terms. If am wrong [sic], I can always return home – to the law of value but something bids me continue with it" (Archive #1600). By the time Dunayevskaya finishes "re-reading" *Capital* in 1951, she will also understand Law of Value dialectically so that value would not be contrasted to "philosophy" – however, economism is difficult to root out.

> 'The determination of Law has thus changed Law itself.' At which Hegel proceeds to show what it has 'at first', what it becomes as 'negative intro-Reflection' developed it, and concludes 'Thus, Law is Essential Relation.' The emphasis is Lenin's and brings us precisely to the comprehension of law in the sense in which Marx uses 'absolute general law' which can only be abrogated by the mediation of the proletariat establishing different social relations.[60]

Law is itself revolutionary in this dialectical reading. Thus, there is no tautological Marx here, but only the dynamics of contradiction – that is, negativity.

By the second week of March 1949, Dunayevskaya wrote to James about having finished the translation of Lenin's Notebook on the *Science of Logic*. She opened the letter obviously pleased with the product but also with a sense of learning and advancement in terms of philosophical knowledge; while playful, there is a serious note struck here with regard to James re-writing his Notes:

> I am extremely happy in being able to send you the conclusion of Lenin's Notes on the Logic. If you wrote your Notes on the Dialectic for me, then, I translated Lenin for you. Surely you who have gone into quite a 'conspiracy' with Lenin on the analysis of Hegel deserved seeing Lenin's notes in their entirety, and not merely in extracts. Being the only Russian, it was my duty to have done this long ago. The only reason (and it is the real ground, not a mere excuse) I have for not doing so is that I could not have without first having digested your Notes, so now we are 'quits'.

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[59] Archive #1600.

[60] Archive #1600. From *Science of Logic*: "Thus Law is *essential relation*. The truth of the unessential world is, at first, a world in and for itself and *other to it*; but this world is a totality since it is itself and that first world. Thus both are immediate Existences and hence reflections into their otherness, and also for this same reason veritably reflected into self. …the essential relation is the consummation of their unity of form." (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 511)

> Perhaps I'll even be conceited enough to say that when you come to rewriting your Notes I can be of service.[61]

Dunayevskaya continued by noting the differences in approach (and, even, the driving question) that separated James and Lenin. While Lenin, she says, was searching for a "new universal" in revolution, James was looking for a new universal to transcend Trotskyism. In other words, the "question" of the moment drove Lenin and James to further their understanding and engagement with the dialectic, but each was rooted in different questions and moments. From her comments, we are led to conclude that this is precisely what makes dialectics contemporary and valuable for the world-historical moment in which we (or the Johnson Forest tendency, or Lenin) find ourselves. In other words, dialectics is a method (to be vulgar, perhaps epistemology is more accurate here) of discerning history in motion, pressed forward by negation and the drive to unify object and subject.

Having drawn both the likeness and distinction between James and Lenin, Dunayevskaya returned to her regular practice of identifying those ideas and sections from Lenin's Notebooks that she found particularly relevant. In this case, she was examining the place of "practice" in Lenin's thinking: "Lenin begins with the fact that 'The dialectic road to cognition of truth is from living observation to abstract thinking and from this to practice' and never lets go of this for a single second."[62] It may at first appear counter-intuitive that Lenin would draw such a certain linkage to practice from the so-called Idealist Hegel; however, Lenin's reading revealed – argued Dunayevskaya – the embryo of historical materialism in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Again, she returned to Lenin's text, as she quoted:

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[61] Archive #1602.
[62] Archive #1603.

> "The activity of man, composing for itself an objective picture of the world changes the external activity, transcends its determinateness (= changes these or other of its aspects, qualities) and thus takes away from it the traits of appearance, externality and nullity and gives it being in-itself and for-itself (=objective truth). ... undoubtedly practice in Hegel stands as a link in the analysis of the process of cognition and precisely as a transition to objective ('absolute' according to Hegel) truth. Marx, consequently, clings to Hegel, introducing the criteria of practice into the theory of knowledge: cf. Theses on Feuerbach."[63]

Lenin's discussion of practice reinforced for Dunayevskaya Marx's call to "change the world" combined with the recognition that the objective world is not merely present and awaiting discovery, but is created (and re-created) by human activity and thought. Dunayevskaya then moved from the discussion of practice to specifically outlining Lenin's notes from Hegel's final section from *Science and Logic*: "The Idea". She noted that Lenin used no fewer than 17 definitions of the Idea; however, rather than focus specifically on each of these definitions (or the role of the Absolute Idea, which will become a cornerstone to her later work), Dunayevskaya was much more taken with Lenin's critique of Marxists – himself included. As she quoted:

> "Marxists criticized the Kantians and Humists at the beginning of the 20th century more in the Feuerbachian ... than in the Hegelian manner." The emphasis on the plural (Marxists) is Lenin's and it follows the remark against Plekhanov; and has an additional

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[63] Archive #1603. The "materialism" of Hegel, of course, is an open debate among philosophers. My own preference is to follow Marcuse, who saw Hegel as an "extreme realist" and whose thought is obviously of political import: "Hegel says that a prevailing social form can be successfully attacked by thought only if this form has come into open contradiction with its own 'truth', in other words; if it can no longer fulfill the demands of its own contents" (Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 2nd. ed ed. (Boston : Beacon Press, 1960), p. 51).

> remark: "The question of the criticism of contemporary Kantianism, Machism, etc." In other words, the emphasis on the plural includes himself as he is the only one in addition to Plekhanov who has bothered much with Machism.[64]

For Dunayevskaya, these notes by Lenin further strengthened the sense of Lenin's break from post-Marx Marxism, including his own works and analyses prior to the initiation of his 1914 philosophical studies.

Historicizing Lenin

The correspondence did not resume again until mid-May 1949.[65] As noted previously, Dunayevskaya had committed to undertaking a further study of Lenin's post-1915 writings, particularly with regard to *Imperialism* and *State and Revolution*. Part of this study also meant reconstructing the historical context of Lenin's writings.[66] Her May 14, 1949 letter to James initiated this work by providing background notes from Krupskaya's memoirs[67] and the introduction to the *Philosophical Notebooks* as published in the Russian edition of Lenin's *Collected Works*.[68] These documents emphasized Lenin's engagement with a variety of philosophical texts, of which Krupskaya recalls that Lenin's " '…aim…in the realm of philosophy was to master the method of transforming philosophy into a concrete guide to action.'"[69] The introduction to the Notebooks further bolstered this point and extended it noting: "All the works of Lenin written during [1914-1916] – the classical treatise *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*[70], *Socialism and War, The United States of Europe Slogan, The Junius Pamphlet, Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, and other writings – are inseparable from *Philosophical Notebooks* [sic]. "[71] Moreover, Dunayevskaya further argued that Lenin's focus on the dialectic provided him with the insight and ability to critique his own mentor, Plekhanov. Lenin's note in this regard was recorded as follows:

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[64] Archive #1604.

[65] It is apparent from the content of these letters that there had been other correspondence over this period; however, these letters are not available in the archives.

[66] By "historical context" here I do not mean to suggest that Dunayevskaya was recounting the European situation during World War I (or the lead up to World War II for that matter) – although, these conditions were important structural influences on the "objective" world that Lenin studies. However, historical context here is directed more to Lenin's own activities with regard to his philosophical studies and the theoretical preparation that this entailed prior to and following 1917.

[67] Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife and comrade. Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1959).

[68] Dunayevskaya attributed the authorship of this introduction to V. Adoratsky, and noted that it was under the general editorship of Nikolai Bukharin.

> "NB Work out: Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectic) probably nearly 1,000 pages (Beltov + against Bogdanov + against Kantians + on fundamental questions, etc. etc.) There is nil in them about the larger Logic, about it, its thoughts (i.e. dialectic proper, as a philosophical science!!)"[72]

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[69] Archive #1605.

[70] There is often a great deal of debate about the term "highest" stage in Lenin's title for *Imperialism*. However, it seems much more likely, given Lenin's study of dialectics, that the meaning of "highest" can be attributed to capitalism reaching Hegel's "highest" category of the dialectic – Idea. As will later be apparent, Dunayevskaya went to significant lengths to demonstrate the dialectical structure of this work and the extensive notebooks on imperialism recorded by Lenin in preparation for writing the text.

[71] Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 14. It is interesting to note that the Russian version being used by Dunayevskaya also included the sentence " 'In all works after 1914 Lenin mentions the dialectic'" (Archive #1605). The English version does not include this statement on dialectics.

[72] Archive #1606. This quote is reproduced as it appears in Dunayevskaya's letter, from her own translation of Lenin's Notebooks on Hegel's *History of Philosophy*. The English version of the translation reproduced in volume 38 of the *Collected Works*, page 274 reads: "NB: To be elaborated: Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectics) probably about 1,000 pages (Beltov + against Bogdanov + against Kantians + fundamental questions, etc. etc.). Among them *about* the large Logic, *in connection with* it, its thought (i.e. dialectics *proper*, as philosophical science) nil!!" While there is nothing substantively different in these two translated paragraphs, it serves as a good "check" on the translations that were being provided by Dunayevskaya. It also demonstrates how readable she renders translation versus the more onerous sentence construction we encounter from the published English version. A word should be said

Although Dunayevskaya subsequently referenced Lenin's short essay "On the Question of Dialectics" she did not include here Lenin's further criticism of Plekhanov by direct quotation; however, it affirmed Lenin's break with what had constituted Marxism in his time and is worth including here for the sake of emphasis: "Dialectics *is* the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism. This is the 'aspect' of the matter (it is not 'an aspect' but the *essence* of the matter) to which Plekhanov, not to speak of other Marxists, paid no attention."[73]

Dunayevskaya's subsequent letter to James of May 17, 1949, further argued that it was possible to "follow Lenin step by step" as he applied dialectics to the study of imperialism. The letter opened with her commenting that she had been thinking of "... some points to be included in the letter to Marcuse." Evidently, the Tendency was preparing to "pitch" the idea of the "Lenin book" to Marcuse (who had recently published *Reason and Revolution*) and was endeavoring to prepare an outline with sufficient content to gain Marcuse's support for the project. References to writing to Marcuse occurred sporadically throughout the remainder of the year; however, Dunayevskaya's actual collaboration and interaction with Marcuse in a serious and sustained manner did not occur until after her break with James. Marcuse aside for the time being, Dunayevskaya began to outline her argument with regard to the application of the "dialectic proper" to Lenin's work on imperialism. As this 1949 letter provided the

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here about Plekhanov. Among the Bolsheviks he was seen as the heir to Marx and Engels; thus, Lenin's note represented a serious critique to how Marxist theory had developed after Marx's death.

[73] "On the Question of Dialectics" written in 1915, Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 360.

foundation for her argument in this regard, it is worth examining Dunayevskaya's reading of Lenin in some detail.

Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin drew out two key elements from his study of dialectics: "The Logic to him is the theory of knowledge which sees (1) the necessary connection objective tie-up of all sides of a given phenomena, and (2) the immanent emergence of difference or the union of the objective logic of evolution and the struggle of differences of polarity."[74] In other words, dialectics reveals the interconnections between phenomena, recognizing that difference is itself a contradiction of essence not appearance or form – in fact, in "form" the "appearance" is unified. From this key epistemological stance, argued Dunayevskaya, Lenin moved to a consideration of imperialism. In this regard she stated: "His study of the objective situation is connected with his study of the phenomenological reflection of this phenomenon in: Hobson's Imperialism (1902); Hilferding's Finance Capital (1910); Luxemburg's Accumulation (1913)."[75] In the case of all three studies none of the authors identified the source or cause (using these terms generally) of the rise of imperialism. While they each identified aspects of the appearance of imperialism in differing forms, the "movement" or contradiction – that is the "dialectic proper" remained absent. Dunayevskaya recounted that it was Lenin's use of the dialectic that answered "how" imperialism arose:

> To Lenin, however, who saw the totality of all sides of imperialism, imperialism emerged from capitalism in general, but capitalism at a stage "when its essential qualities became transformed into their opposites." And precisely because he saw the affirmation in the negation (and who, which class, was to affirm it) he was not bewildered by the oppositeness of monopoly

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[74] Archive #1607.
[75] Archive #1607.

> and competition; on the contrary he saw that the former did not drive out the latter "but coexists over it".[76]

In other words, Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin's identification of the monopoly stage was the result of his "new eyes" seeing contradiction in the very essence of capitalist production. Moreover, Lenin did this by preserving class analysis rather than jettisoning it as did the other previously ~~cited~~ studies of imperialism.[77] Dunayevskaya was quite clear why these studies missed the true nature of imperialism – they focused on the market and exchange rather than investigating production: "These three, from the social liberal Hobson to the revolutionist Luxemburg and including the centrist Hilferding, fail to grasp the quintessential, and that is that it is the concentration of production which led to monopoly (out of which imperialism was born)."[78]

At this point in her letter, Dunayevskaya noted that she was not articulating anything new – that the Tendency was already aware of Lenin's different critique and his argument with Luxemburg's theory of accumulation. However, what was significant, she argued, was that the Tendency could now link Lenin's *Imperialism* with his philosophical studies:

> This must seem very repetitious to you since I am not saying anything we did not already know, but I am trying to say it from a new angle – to connect what was new in his Imperialism with his conclusion that none of the Marxists had understood Capital and particularly saw its first chapter for it is impossible to understand that without comprehension of the whole of Hegel's Logic [sic].[79]

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[76] Archive #1607.

[77] Archive #1607.

[78] Archive #1607.

[79] Archive #1608. Dunayevskaya goes on to explicate the oppositions that are immediately apparent in the commodity: "The form of value, where Marx 'flirted' with the dialectic is full of one thing manifesting itself as its opposite: use value appears as its

From here, Dunayevskaya moved to a further criticism of Kautsky, Trotsky and Bukharin – all of which she drew from her understanding of Lenin's philosophical insights:

> What Lenin seems to be saying is that with the Marxists of the past ½ century the repetition that the fetishistic form of a product of labour as a commodity hides the social relations of men, was a mere ritual and because of that they, in their age, failed to see the fetishistic form of appearance of the concentration of production as monopoly-capital on which imperialism was built hid the socialization of labour and hence imperialism as "the eve of the revolution." Because they failed to grasp this they separated politics and economics.[80]

For these "other" Marxists – with whom Lenin would have been included prior to 1914 – the phenomenal form of capitalism, particularly in the appearance of the world market, took precedence over an analysis of production. However, viewing imperialism through Lenin's new understanding meant viewing the "transitions" or "transformations" that were taking place within capitalism as opposites "met" in dialectical relationships. The core transformation at this point – that is when Lenin undertook his study of

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opposite, value; concrete labour as its opposite, abstract labour; private labour as its opposite, social labour; and this constant transition of one into the other creating ever deeper contradictions and antagonisms out of which new relations are born" (Archive #1608).

[80] Archive #1608. Here we also see an example of Dunayevskaya returning to an argument she has previously made, but now it is somewhat recast. Recall that her 1943 studies of the Russian economy included an unpublished essay entitled "Politics and Economics" (see Archive #103). In that early draft she also argued that a false separation of politics and economics led to the wrong-headed analysis of Russia put forward under the banner "bureaucratic collectivism". She argued that the "mutual reinforcement" of politics and economics were key in understanding social relations, particularly under capitalism. However, this is much more philosophically refined in the current letter we have under consideration: "Since truth, in turn, is a process which includes life, knowledge (including practice of man) and absolute idea, or notion plus reality, the relationship of politics, or the activity of the proletariat, to economics, or the activity of the objective forces, is that of man transcending nature; or the activity of the workers 'to a man' leading to the birth of social man" (Archive #1608, underlining in original).

imperialism—was the transformation of capitalistic "free" competition into its opposite, monopoly.

In addition to discussing Lenin's insights as they pertained to imperialism, Dunayevskaya also recommended to James that they highlight (for Marcuse) "[Lenin's] references to Capital in order to show what he saw in it as he read Hegel that he had not seen before."[81] Significantly, Dunayevskaya was consolidating her own sense of Lenin's application of dialectics to *Capital* while also tracing from Lenin forward the historical development of Marxist thought. For example, she drew a lineage from Lenin's philosophical studies to Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* to the Johnson Forest tendency:

> One more thing must be included [in the letter to Marcuse], and that is developing the connection between WWII and the liberation movement on the one hand and the appearance … of Marcuse's Reason and Revolution on the other hand; and the end of WWII and the total collapse of the old categories and our appearance with Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks now.[82]

This attempt to trace connections between the appearance of various "intellectual" or philosophical moments and historical events was quite in keeping with Lenin's own approach. Dunayevskaya was underscoring the sense that "ideas" do not simply appear but are produced by "objective world conditions", which, are subsequently reshaped by human agency.[83]

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[81] Archive #1609.

[82] Archive #1610.

[83] Lenin's practice in his philosophical notebooks was to trace historical "connections" dialectically. Throughout the correspondence we'll see Dunayevskaya mirror this practice. Lenin's Notebooks on the *Science of Logic* record the following, which is appropriately linked to this particular practice of reading history as connections and moments: "The word "moment" is often used by Hegel in the sense of moment of *con*

Dunayevskaya followed the letter to James a day later with a brief note to Boggs (May 18, 1949). Boggs had evidently circulated notes to Dunayevskaya and James that discussed Lenin's early *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in conjunction with Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind.* Although the letter is better described in length as a brief note, Dunayevskaya raised two very significant points; at least they are significant in terms of her own philosophical development and orientation.

The first point related to Lenin's *Empirio-Criticism.* While she agreed (apparently) with Boggs's assessment that Lenin's pre-1914 work was characterized by a "philosophic conception" that divided dialectics from materialism, she argued that the outstanding question to be asked and answered is why was this division part of his early work:

> We must know: why was Lenin thus limited? In my letter to J also dated 5/17, I try to develop a historical reason. I point to two facts: the relationship of VIL to Plekhanov paralleling that of Marx to Feuerbach and, two, the backwardness of Russia. ... Now it seems to me that Lenin's "error" can be worked out philosophically, which is why I am writing to you, and economically, which I hope to do.[84]

Dunayevskaya concluded the letter by linking this "working out philosophically" to Lenin's return to Hegel in 1914 and subsequently to the activities of the masses in the same historical period:

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nection, moment of concatenation." Lenin then draws this example: "A river and the *drops* of this river. The position of *every* drop, its relation to the others; its connection with the others; the direction of its movement; its speed; the line of the movement – straight, curved, circular, etc. – upwards, downwards. The sum of the movement. Concepts, as *registration* of individual aspects of the movement, of individual "*streams*," etc. There you have [approximately] the picture of the world according to Hegel's *Logic* – of course minus God and the Absolute" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 147).

[84] Archive #1611.

> It seems to me also that with J's working out of the Puritan Revolution, we get a different relationship of masses to philosophy than we got when we kept on repeating that Kant for years before the French Revolution worked out the bourgeois mode of thought, n'est-ce pas? In other words while working out the philosophic relationship of materialism and dialectics which will explain Lenin and also us – where were the masses in 1908 when Lenin tackled philosophy for the first time and where in 1915?[85]

The second point raised related to Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. Dunayevskaya noted that the Tendency to this point had not been able to work out the theses, but that "it seems to me to contain a key to our present problem".[86] Interestingly, Dunayevskaya singled out two of the *Theses* in particular. Not surprisingly, the first related to a critique of "existing materialism" (Thesis I) and the failure of materialism to develop a concept of practice or activity. [87] The second is Thesis X, which reads: "The standpoint of the old materialism is 'civil' society; the standpoint of the new is *human* society, or socialized humanity."[88] In her note to Boggs, Dunayevskaya underscored "human". Although as yet unarticulated, Dunayevskaya's reading of Hegel, the focus on activity or practice was leading her to a different, humanist interpretation of Marx. It does not appear, however, that this attempt to engage in a discussion based in the 1845 *Theses* was taken-up by other members of the Tendency. This is arguably the start of the philosophical break – or at least given the benefit of hindsight it is a moment (in the Hegelian sense) in which the differences between the thought and philosophic work of Boggs and James compared quite differently to the direction being staked out by Dunayevskaya.

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[85] Archive #1611.

[86] Archive #1611.

[87] Thesis I reads: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is the thing, reality, *sensuousness*, is conceived only in the form of the object or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the *active* side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism – but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such" (*Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 143). Marx concluded that Feuerbach's failure to appreciate the importance of practice meant "...he does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary,' of practical, activity" (*Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 143). Arguably, Dunayevskaya had "appreciated" this active side throughout her philosophical development, particularly if one examines her focus on "other subjectivities" – women, youth, and Blacks, for example.

[88] *Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 145.

For the first time in this series of correspondence, the archives include a response from James to the various philosophical issues being raised by both Dunayevskaya and Boggs. On May 20 he wrote directly to Boggs; however, as was the practice among the Tendency, the letter was shared among several members. This letter was also accompanied by Notes on a Discussion between Boggs and James which were circulated May 27, 1949 among the Tendency leadership. In his response to previous correspondence among the Tendency, James attempted to answer Dunayevskaya's "call" to work out Lenin philosophically rather than simply historically. What emerged from James' letter and discussions with Boggs are two insights, taken up below, with regard to Lenin's transition between 1907 and 1914 and its relationship to the philosophical work of the Johnson Forest tendency. Again, the letter highlighted that these insights must be worked out in greater clarity in order to write to Marcuse.

The first of these insights, according to James, was that *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* was born of a kind of historical necessity rather than a philosophical error *per se*. Thus he concluded: "Now in the reaction [to Russian Menshevism permeated by liberalism] he [Lenin] had to battle for plain materialism. Reading the book [*Empirio-Criticism*] over I find no inadequacy. He did what he saw needed to be done. He deals with the epistemological question in general."[89] However, James argued that objective world conditions were considerably altered by 1914. At this point Lenin was no longer arguing against a tendency within the Russian movement, but was now called upon to challenge the growing labour bureaucracy of the Second International. James wrote: "...socialism itself is in question; not from liberal idealists, not from Kantians, but from avowed Marxists, materialists. Therefore his study of the Logic had to clarify materialism, not materialism from idealism but vulgar materialism from dialectical materialism."[90]

The second insight James related to his "Nevada" document on dialectics, that is his "Notes on Dialectics". Taking up Dunayevskaya's argument that the Johnson Forest tendency was an intellectual heir to Lenin's philosophical work, James argued that the Tendency (and, by extension the revolutionary movement in general) faced a more deadly enemy than Lenin faced in 1914 – that is, the combination of Stalinism and the philosophical errors of the Fourth International: "Hence for us the new aspect— the complete theory of knowledge, dialectic worked at and out in a way that our predecessors did not have the necessity to do. And as Lenin had to attack Pl'v [Plekhanov] and Rosa [Luxemburg], so we have to clear up all problems with the IVth [Fourth International]."[91] In facing this "more deadly enemy" James argues that the Tendency is forced to go deeper, moving beyond "synthetic cognition" (which he believes dominated Lenin's approach) to "dialectical philosophical cognition".[92] Moreover, the impetus for a more dialectical cognition, argued James, was (like Lenin) born of historical necessity. In the case of the Tendency, it was the presence of Stalinism that was the most immediate and pressing historically necessity: "Stalinism is a materialism much more dangerous than vulgar materialism. It actually attacks and carries out all renovation of capitalism except the abolition of wage-labour."[93]

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[89] Archive #1612.
[90] Archive #1612.
[91] Archive #1612.

James' view of a dialectical philosophical cognition was centred in the recognition that practice and theory are not opposites. While Dunayevskaya had previously emphasized Lenin's concrete reading of history and his focus on practice, James further extended his argument. As he wrote: "For us in 1948 there was no theory and then practice. For us theory is practice; their unity for us is established by the needs of life. There was still a division in L's time (1914). I see it in his notes, I am very conscious that for us that division does not exist. I see a dialectical development in the Marxist studies of dialectic."[94] For James, the Tendency must be tasked with working out an epistemology which sees idealism and materialism united in the practices of the proletariat[95] -- that this unity is revolutionary politics. While Lenin could only work this out as an abstract universal, James argued, the world conditions post-1948 required employing dialectics completely: "As materialists we meet man in his environment, but now that the real history of humanity is about to begin, the Hegelian concept of speculative reason, comes to life with us, as never before, tho [sic] on our basis."[96] James further asserted: "The core of dialectics is self-movement through opposition. Good. But this is the core of dialectic – for him [Lenin], in 1914. But for us, 1948, in our world, the core of dialectic is the materialist interpretation of Hegel's last chapter in the Logic, the complete interpenetration of subjective and objective, idealism and materialism."[97] James closed his letter with a discussion of "the Party" as the subjective element and "the masses" as the objective element which he argued sets the Tendency apart from post-Marx Marxists – especially as Marxism had come to be taken over by the "one party state."

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[92] Hegel defined synthetic cognition in the *Science of Logic* as "…aims at the *comprehension* of what *is*, that is, at grasping the multiplicity of determinations in their unity" (Hegel, *Science of Logic,* p. 793); however, he says that such cognition is "…not yet self-determining" (Hegel, *Science of Logic, p.* 794).

[93] Archive #1612.

[94] Archive #1613.

[95] Archive #1613.

James and Boggs subsequently circulated their notes on further discussions relating to these two insights raised by James' letter and the development of a dialectical history of the emergence of various lines of philosophical thought culminating in Hegel's system. At the close of these notes, James and Boggs sketched out the contents of the letter to Marcuse and the need to relate Lenin's theory to historical circumstances. The emphasis here, however, remained one of both "telling the post-Marx story" while ensuring that the Tendency's distinctiveness was also clearly demonstrated. For example:

> For us dialectic in 1949 is theory of knowledge, the whole, the complete conception becomes a means by which we understand and carry on our concrete activity. In other words, what Lenin still conceived as a theoretical business, telling Marxists to study and look up etc. has become for us regular daily method for dealing with both fundamental questions and phenomena. That was not so

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[96] Archive #1613, underlining in original.
[97] Archive #1614.

> with Lenin. He said you can't resist unless you study these questions.[98]

As far as assignments go, these notes indicated that Dunayevskaya should focus her efforts on Lenin's notes on Bukharin as this would further clarify Lenin's different philosophical approach and to correlate the "... exact dates, reading of Logic, writing Imperialism, when first started, finished etc. Get necessary quotes from Imperialism and State and Revolution on objective world connections... ."[99] Dunayevskaya began these assigned tasks, reporting on her progress in her next letter dated June 8, 1949 which we will examine in the next Chapter.

Conclusion

At the outset of our consideration of the philosophical correspondence it was clear that the Tendency as a whole was, in a sense, looking for its place – both organizationally (in a party) and philosophically. As discussed at the outset of the Chapter, Dunayevskaya's outline for a book on state capitalism and Marxism demonstrated her (and the Tendency's) considerable engagement with classical political economy and Marx's critique and contribution to both political economy proper and its object of analysis – that is, the capitalist mode of production. The book outline further situated the Tendency's state capitalist analysis within Marxism and the world historical circumstances of post-war global capitalism. The outline demonstrated the beginnings of a more dialectical sensibility to Dunayevskaya's writings. However, the outline remained tentative and less developed than other Tendency documents. Rather than conveying a sense of indecision or a lack of confidence, however, the reader is left with the feeling that Dunayevskaya was on the verge of new discovery and insight. By the close of 1947, and in keeping with its rationale for leaving the Workers Party, we know that the Tendency viewed state capitalism as a theory that expanded beyond the Russian Question. The act of leaving the Workers Party allowed for the Tendency to consolidate (and in some cases, discover) its philosophical foundations.

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[98] Archive #1619.
[99] Archive #1619.

The correspondence reviewed in this Chapter covered a brief nine months. However, in that time, we found that James had completed his "Notes on Dialectics"; that Dunayevskaya had translated all of Lenin's Notebooks on Hegel; and that she had ventured forth several hypotheses and readings in regard to Hegel and Marx. In addition, she had also taken on the assignment of relating the historical context to Lenin's philosophical leaps. As we move deeper into the correspondence in the next Chapter, it is important to keep three elements in mind from this first nine month period.

First, the letters of September – October 1948 demonstrated Dunayevskaya's complete break with Trotsky and Trotskyism. Although her 1939 break was significant, she expended considerable effort working within Trotsky's framework on issues such as the National Question. However, what is clear from her letters in 1948 is that she no longer felt an attachment to Trotsky's theory—particularly as she now judged it "petty-bourgeois", the source of the counter-revolution. Trotsky's infatuation with state property and attachment to planning could not result in the realization of a new society or the "workers' state" according to Dunayevskaya's analysis. Turning from Trotsky allowed Dunayevskaya to focus on Lenin as a theoretician and philosopher. Even though the Tendency would remain in international Trotskyism for another three years, the intellectual ties for Dunayevskaya are broken with her conclusion of Trotsky's failures in 1948.

The break with Trotsky and Trotskyism leads the second important realization to emerge from the correspondence, that is, the treatment of Lenin as a serious Marxist theorist in his own right. It is the engagement of Lenin's philosophical notebooks that opened Hegel to Dunayevskaya in a profound way. Whereas in the past Dunayevskaya had been hesitant to engage on questions of Hegel, she now sees herself as bold (almost to the point of brazenness, she feared at one point) in forwarding new, possibly revolutionary readings of Hegel, Marx, and Lenin. In fact, based on her letter of mid-November 1948 concerning the structure of Hegel's *Logic* as related to *Capital* we can anticipate her revised reading of Chapter 1, Volume I, which is the subject of Chapter Nine. For our purposes here, though, it is sufficient to note her insight that structure is not only about the reader being able to access the argument, but is also about the very construction of the logic that provides the foundation for the argument in the first place. In other words, relating the parallels between the way that Marx outlined his arguments in *Capital* to the way that Hegel outlined his philosophical system in the *Science of Logic* (and elsewhere) are seen by Dunayevskaya to offer the potential for a new understanding to emerge of Marx's most significant work.

Finally, the reader needs to bear in mind that it is not simply the structure of Hegel's works that interested Dunayevskaya, but also the categories he devised for his philosophical system and the dialectical epistemology that grounds all discovery, the very source of historical movement. For example, not only does she begin to explore the relationship of "limit" and "barrier" in Hegel's category of Being, but she engaged the relationship between form and essence – two categories that she will draw upon extensively in later correspondence in order to move the Tendency's state capitalist analysis to a more philosophically grounded reading of *Capital*. Further, it was in this early correspondence that Dunayevskaya began to advocate a more thorough engagement with Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and the *Theses on Feuerbach.* Combined with an insistence on keeping analysis firmly rooted in production – and emphasizing that this was class analysis—the humanist reading of Marx was becoming more pronounced (even if unnamed as such) in Dunayevskaya's thinking and writing.

Keeping these three elements in mind, however, does not mean that we should read Dunayevskaya's development as an uninterrupted, linear path. She was engaged in a process of discovery. Some of her insights put forward in these letters are not revised again; or, if they re-emerge, it is often within the context of greatly expanded reading of Marx. Perhaps most notably, at this point Dunayevskaya still had a tendency to separate philosophy from economics. From her own comments it is clear that she did not yet see how the law of value, something she still understood in mostly economic terms, could be reconciled with a dialectical reading of *Capital*. Yet, when she achieves this synthesis in subsequent years, it significantly entrenched the place of value in her analysis. However, in order to reach this depth of analysis from Dunayevskaya's writings further review of the philosophical correspondence is required. It is to a "deeper" engagement with philosophy that we now turn.

Chapter Eight

Dialectics and Imperialism

Introduction

The previous Chapter examined the beginning of a period of intensive philosophical study for the Tendency. Johnson Forest was clearly engaged with developing an understanding of the relationship between Hegel's philosophy and Lenin's 1914 transitions that apparently resulted from his re-reading of Hegel. By the close of September 1948, it was clear that the intellectual (and emotional) ties between Dunayevskaya and Trotsky's thought had been completely severed. The counter-revolution, she argued, was born in the very moment of successful revolution. Why was this the case? Because philosophically Trotsky (among others) did not understand the inter-relationships between opposites, for example, labour and capital, and the dual nature of each. As a result, even great revolutionaries like Trotsky fell for the tyranny of "plan". With this severing a kind of theoretical and intellectual freedom becomes apparent in Dunayevskaya's studies, just as was apparent after her 1939 break with Trotsky on the Russian Question. In the early months of 1949, Dunayevskaya focused her attention on Hegel via Lenin's "Philosophical Notebooks". In this Chapter we will resume our discussion of the philosophical correspondence among the Tendency's leadership beginning with letters in June 1949 and ending in September 1949. Although the letters reviewed in the Chapter span only four months, they cover substantial theoretical and philosophical ground.

The Chapter begins by examining Dunayevskaya's work on Lenin's "Notebooks on Imperialism" which constituted Lenin's research and study notes written in preparation for his pamphlet on imperialism (1917). Dunayevskaya found these to be more engaging than the actual pamphlet that was aimed at a general audience. For her, Lenin's transformation is evident in his notebooks; however, as the correspondence revealed, James wanted to move the group to a clear identification of the moments of Lenin's transitions (or leaps). Dunayevskaya was assigned this task and works through Lenin's writings to identify two key transitions which she linked to his renewed study of philosophy. In addition to the discussion of Lenin and his transitions, the correspondence in this period also demonstrated an emerging theoretical difference between the Tendency's leadership. The Chapter closes with Boggs and Dunayevskaya clearly engaging new insights derived from Hegel (Dunayevskaya more so than Boggs) while James appeared reticent to appear "too Hegelian". For our study of Dunayevskaya's development, however, the most important element raised in the Chapter relates to Boggs' highlighting the importance of human freedom in Hegel's thought.

Lenin as Philosopher

June 1949

While the archives do not preserve any of Dunayevskaya's more personal thoughts with regard to James or Boggs at this point of their collaboration,[1] the speed with which she takes up her tasks within the Tendency speaks to a strong commitment and eagerness to engage these increasingly complex philosophical questions. Her letter of June 8, 1949 began tracing Lenin's philosophical development in his *Notebooks on Imperialism*, which Dunayevskaya noted were initiated in mid-1915 and the pamphlet, with which we are most familiar, was completed in 1916. The expansive nature of Lenin's analysis was demonstrated by Dunayevskaya's overview of the Notebooks: "The Notebooks fill up 693 pages; they include quotations from 148 books [in various languages] and this means it does not include those books of which we have no quotations, for ex., Phenomenology. Also there are quotations from 232 articles... that had been published in 49 different periodicals."[2] Dunayevskaya also outlined Lenin's

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[1] Dunayevskaya's correspondence from Europe did indicate a frustration with James as the "Invading Socialist Society" pamphlet was being completed (1947); however, what I intend to emphasize here is that the archives best preserve the philosophical work of the

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Tendency rather than the interpersonal moments of the Tendency's development, consolidation, and eventual breakup.

[2] Archive #1621. The reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology* was significant to Dunayevskaya as she had started the letter with a comment on the M-E-L Institute having excluded some of Lenin's materials from the Notebooks which the editors felt were not relevant. Dunayevskaya speculated that the exclusion included Lenin's notes on the *Phenomenology*. I should also note here that Dunayevskaya's mistrust of the M-E-L Institute, whom she called Stalinist brutes, appears justified when one reads the Preface to the 1968 English edition: "The historic significance of Lenin's book lies in its economic substantiation of the new theory of socialist revolution. Proceeding from a Marxist analysis of imperialism and the law discovered by him of the uneven economic and political development of capitalist countries, Lenin scientifically proved that in the era of monopoly capitalism the simultaneous victory of the socialist revolution in all or most civilized countries was impossible, but that it was fully possible, and inevitable, first in several countries, or even *in one country*" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 39, p. 19, emphasis mine) . Compare this "socialism in one country" to Lenin's own introduction to *Imperialism*: "... out of the universal ruin caused by the [first world] war a world-wide revolutionary crisis is arising which, however prolonged and arduous its stages may be, cannot end otherwise than in proletarian revolution and its victory" (Vladimir Il ich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking : Foreign Language Press, 1973), p. 6). Further, he concluded his 1920 Introduction with: "Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problems of the Communist movement and of the impeding social revolution.

structure for the pamphlet on imperialism as it appeared in the Notebooks; as well as Lenin's plan for an article on Trade Unions (which was apparently originally compiled by Lenin in 1912 or 1913). Given the relationship between imperialism and labour bureaucracy outlined by Lenin in his final pamphlet, it is not surprising that the *Notebooks on Imperialism* included both studies of global imperialist markets and production combined with the emergence of trade unionism and its own chauvinistic support for national imperialist projects. However, it is also not surprising that Dunayevskaya drew attention to these items (the plan for the Trade Union article was less than one page among the 693 that comprise the Notebooks) given the Tendency's focus on production and the role of the masses in realizing revolution.[3] The Tendency was generally suspicious of trade union bureaucracy, particularly given their lived experience with Miners' and Autoworkers' unions in the United States in the 1940s.

James followed-up Dunayevskaya's letter on June 10, 1949. He noted that Dunayevskaya was covering a lot of ground; however he still felt that the discussions of Lenin remained "off point". He argued that the core problem facing the Tendency was

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Imperialism is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed since 1917 on a world-wide scale" (Lenin, *Imperialism*, p. 10).

[3] A very interesting discrepancy exists between the English edition of Volume 39 of the *Collected Works* and Dunayevskaya's rendering of the "Plan for Article on Trade Unions" recounted in her letter to James. While Dunayevskaya had the ability to work from the original Russian, the English version translates this as "Plan of an Article on Syndicates" (Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 39, p. 731). Obviously, syndicates are significantly different than Trade Unions and the conclusions that one draws from the use of the term syndicate would lead to an emphasis on capitalist forms of organization (Lenin discusses these at length in *Imperialism*) rather than the corresponding bureaucratism that Dunayevskaya and the Tendency attached to trade union aristocracy. Rather than argue the accuracy of the English translation, it is sufficient here to note that a discrepancy exists and that Dunayevskaya's rendering lends credence to the conclusions being reached by the Tendency. Moreover, they are also in keeping with Lenin's overall contributions on the Trade Union question.

the development of what it was that changed Lenin's view, that forced him to return to the study of philosophy: "Lenin in 1914 had one view of Capital and of Philosophy. The war and the collapse of the Second Int. made him study Dialectic and changed his view of Capital and Philosophy."[4] James went further to suggest that prior to 1914 Lenin was the "same" as his other comrades philosophically. Yet it was Lenin's practice, his concrete experience as a revolutionary that James saw as a possible source of the "other" Lenin: "But there is another Lenin: the practicing revolutionary in Russian. And here he is dialectical to an extreme degree. His is an extreme revolutionary temperament driven by the sharpest contradictions in Russia."[5] James further posed the key question for the Tendency to work out was: "What did Lenin primarily discover? More precisely, what fundamental conception illuminated his reading of the Logic? We have the war, the breakdown of the Int., the disillusionment with all previous thought, and the method of thought."[6] From here, James encouraged Dunayevskaya to return to Lenin's works and classify Lenin's thoughts on philosophy, and the labour movement, for example, according to his thinking before and after his philosophical studies.

James continued the theme of his June 10th letter on the 13th with further thoughts on the Tendency's work on reading Lenin's development dialectically. This letter began with what James identified as "general ideas" taken from Hegel, primarily sketching out the historical emergence of capitalism in terms of the categories "Being", "Essence", and "Notion". At first read, these "general ideas" seem almost unrelated to the Lenin question; however, James linked these categories to the historical transition in Lenin's thought:

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[4] Archive #1624, emphasis in original.
[5] Archive #1624.
[6] Archive #1625.

> First, Being is pre-bourgeois society, the logical essence of the pre-bourgeois society. Essence is the distillation of bourgeois society.
> Notion is the subjective mastery of bourgeois and future society. But Hegel could only do this subjectively, intellectually, for a few… . The fact that Hegel summed up [all previous thought] is what makes him so important, today. He stood to the [French Revolution] as we stand today to the [Russian Revolution]. Now.
> Lenin came at the climax of capitalism; and beginning with the [Revolutionary] experience, he transferred it to world-[capitalism]; and emerged with State and Rev. He posed the [proletariat] "to a man" and yet had to pose the party in opposition to it, abstractly in S & R, and then with bitter concreteness in 1920, the unions vs. the party.[7]

Tracing this history through Hegelian categories led James to conclude that the Tendency's task was to resolve the question of "the party" – that is, what is its organizational form (object) in relation to the masses (subject). "Note that there is no other problem in the world today – all problems revolve around the 'one party state.' If that can be solved, there is no obstacle to the irresistible victory of international socialism."[8]

To further illustrate his argument and method for examining Lenin, James included a chart comparing post-Marx Marxists ("they") to Lenin ("he") to Johnson

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[7] Archive #1626, underlining in original.

[8] Archive #1627, underlining in original. James' revolutionary zeal aside, the question of organization and its relationship to revolutionary philosophy and practice dogged Dunayevskaya throughout her life. At the time of her death in 1987, she was working on a book examining this question – although her concept of the revolutionary subject was arguably much more developed that James'.

Forest tendency ("us" and "we") under the categories "capitalism", "proletariat" and "method". James' original chart is reproduced in a table on the following page.[9]

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[9] Archive #1627-1628. Although this chart was very incomplete, it illustrated the comparisons that James wished the Tendency to make and concretize with regard to post-Marx Marxism, Lenin, and the Tendency's state capitalist position. It should also be recalled that this tabulating of transitions was first initiated by Dunayevskaya with regard to Trotsky's thinking in her letters of September 1948 – which were strongly praised by James both to Constance Webb and Boggs (see: Archive #1630).

Capitalism		
They. pre-1914 capitalism free competition and some monopoly orderly organization of imperialism, or Rosa L'g. At the height of monopoly it will collapse, back into free competition	He. Cap-ism. 1914-20 Monopoly, Monopoly, Monopoly, going into State capitalism, state-cap., state-cap. redivision of the world Increase of antagonisms 1923 clearest perception of A few western nations against Ger., Rus., & many hundreds of millions in the East	Us. 1940 State-cap. Going into int'l. reorganization No redivision But Unification of the world. Incredible increase of antagonisms
Prol.		
Pre-1914. Must keep the party. “Movement” everything. Work out everything by “democracy”. Even the rev. Socialism = what we have in Britain carried to extreme complete nationalization; no confiscation; parliament; democracy; plan	Lenin 1914-1923 The economic structure of monopoly cap. Demands that this become state-cap. in (Rus.) and around workers take over acc't'g and control all over the world which, in advanced countries, is state-capitalistic. NB. For world mkt. & free competition.	Us. Motive power of cap. must be substituted a new motive power: I cannot over-emphasize importance of this. Party must organize for this. We Complete overcoming of all opposites, politics & economics, nat'l. and int'l.; party & mass
Method		
They. Pure Kantianism, degenerated: A mixture of uncritical idealism and uncritical positivism pre-1914	Lenin. Unity of opposites Stages of Transition, Transition, Transition, Transition. (Something new for him) which is governed by the solution of a concrete problem, and conflict between the bourgeoisie or petty-bourgeois authoritarian way and the proletariat creative way. Each stage of transition arises from the previous stage, and expresses the basic contradictions in a new and more acute form. Democracy = democ. Mobilization of the masses, democ. org'n of army at rear etc. But inside and outside Russia still poses rev. party as opposite to reformist party: has to owing to great mass of semi-proletarians and petty bourgeoisie.	We. Owing to vast extension of state cap. and its consequences, and the objective situation (Mass Resistance – mass strikes in U.S. – interrelations of economy, etc. etc. pose whole prol. Against all parties which = bureaucracy

Table 1: Reproduced from CLR James Letter to Raya Dunayevskaya, June 13, 1949, Archives, #1626-1629.

Again, James underlined the importance of the task set out for the Tendency:

> If, concretely, we draw the line between him [Lenin] and them and all shades, [Leon Trotsky]; [Bukharin]; Rosa; if we do this with the

> utmost concreteness and formal tabulation and as sharply as possible we shall have done a tremendous historical [service], and cleared the way for us politically. ... This work must begin. I am sure that in the work and in the concrete changes we shall understand what [Lenin] saw in the Logic and not vice versa. The Logic will help us, but the truth lies in the concrete.[10]

The very last paragraph of the letter closed with final instructions to Dunayevskaya: "This means that you, Rae, must concretize every stage of capital and what was thought about it at the time (briefly of course) particularly in 1914. Note that while some may have talked about monopoly, etc. we will be able to show up what they thought by contrast with Lenin."[11]

Having delivered clear instructions to Dunayevskaya, James turned his attention to the philosophical work being undertaken by Boggs. His letter of June 19, 1949 to Boggs indicated that she had forced him "... to make a polemic" against her. While he took issue with Boggs' abstract philosophizing, the more significant aspect of the letter related to his combined reading of *Imperialism* and chapter 32 from Volume I of *Capital*; and, his proposed outline for the Lenin book. James encouraged Boggs to stick with concretizing a dialectical reading of *Imperialism*; as he stated:

> But for the time being Imperialism – extract its guts. Scrutinize it. Dialecticalize it. Develop the implications. By dialecticalize it, I mean analyze it in dialectical terms. Then see what you can do with it in strict logical terms, quantity, quantitative ratio, etc. , as I have tried to do. Marxists in the past have emphasized Imperialism and war. We should read now for what it signifies about the structure of capitalism. Imperialism is Marx's chapter on the Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation concretized.

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[10] Archive #1629, underlining in original.
[11] Archive #1629.

> That is the 1914 stage of the Infinite. We have to concretize what Lenin described as Historical Tendencies of his time.[12]

Noting the relationship between chapter 32 of *Capital* and *Imperialism* appears particularly prescient on James part – it is also testament to how familiar the Tendency was with what they viewed as Marx's core work. In the case of chapter 32, Marx outlined the self-movement of capitalism which resulted in the appearance of monopoly. Although Lenin did not cite this chapter (in fact, the majority of citations in *Imperialism* are from Volume III of *Capital*), the parallels are immediately apparent. For example, Marx wrote:

> …as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, then the further socialization of labour and further transformation of the land and other means of production, as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form. That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the labourer, but the capitalist exploiting many labourers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralization of capital. One capitalist always kills many.[13]

Marx linked this "expropriation" to the capitalistic tendency toward monopoly: "The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up, and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalistic integument."[14] And, should his method be at all unclear to any reader, Marx closed this chapter with reference to the Hegelian dialectic in the form of the "negation of negation": "The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation."[15]

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[12] Archive #1634-5.

[13] Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), p. 836.

[14] Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), p. 837.

Likewise, Lenin wrote: "The enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid process of concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises are one of the most characteristic features of capitalism."[16] Lenin further noted, "This transformation of competition into monopoly is one of the most important – if not the most important—phenomena of modern capitalist economy."[17] From these general observations about the transition from competition to monopoly, Lenin moved to consideration of empirical data which not only proved the move (transition) to monopoly (as Marx argued) but revealed the dominance of finance capital in the epoch of monopoly: "The extraordinary high rate of profit obtained from the issue of securities, which is one of the principal functions of finance capital, plays a very important part in the development and consolidation of the financial oligarchy."[18]

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[15] Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), p. 837. Although outside the scope of consideration here, it is an easy step to link this chapter of *Capital* to analysis that would be more identifiable today under the name "globalization studies"; for example, as he discussed the socialization of labour, Marx stated: "…the economizing of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined socialized labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and this, the international character of the capitalist regime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the masss of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt… ." (Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), p. 836). Given these observations, it is also not surprising that the following chapter in *Capital* is entitled "The Modern Theory of Colonization".

[16] Lenin, *Imperialism*, p. 12.

[17] Lenin, *Imperialism*, p. 14.

By linking Marx's chapter on monopoly (which is, admittedly, a much more abstract treatment of the tendency than Lenin's) to Lenin's concrete treatment of financial capital as the monopoly stage of capitalism – a stage which Lenin argued was a transition—James drew together Hegel, Marx and Lenin. What resulted, then, was the ability to link both theoretically and concretely the transition to "planned" or state capitalist economies within the overall framework of capitalism as part of the transition to monopoly. As James noted:

> Many things will have to be worked out here. But to get this break [Lenin's own transition] sharply enough and all that it means – that is a job. In 1914, not a soul talked about "planned economy" – nobody. ... Get back into the climate of 1914. ... He saw as clear as day that monopoly meant control, some sort of control. ... He saw, and we have to say that he saw, then. It saves us from having to say how we see now.[19]

Having discussed Lenin's *Imperialism* and the direction the Tendency should take with their study of Lenin and his philosophical transition, James outlined the article manuscript as he envisaged it. We are now able to see quite clearly and in a straight forward manner the direction James wished for this work. The historical study of Lenin's thought would be grounded in Hegel's *Logic* as this marked Lenin's transition to philosophy. The *Logic* became the means, or method, that allowed Lenin to "see" the "transformation" of competitive capitalism "into its opposite" monopoly – just as the dialectic revealed to Marx monopoly as the "negation of negation." Yet, having traced these elements through Marx to Lenin to the state capitalist position, the troubling problem of party and organization remained. On this point, James offered a "leap" that tied together these apparently disparate threads of analysis:

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[18] *Imperialism*, p. 63.
[19] Archive #1633-4.

> Now I am going to jump a bit. You see it seems to me that he [Lenin] wanted to finish with the 2nd International as a type of organization. His party, therefore, was merely the vanguard of a new type of organization. Here new in the organization is the counter to the stagnation inherent in all monopoly—here is the source of movement – free creative activity to replace free competition.[20]

Although "free creative activity" is later addressed by the Tendency as the opposite to planning, at this point in time, James was only beginning to grasp the dialectical notion of the labourer as the core of the analysis of capitalism and the source of revolutionary change. Arguably, though, he was correct to mark the uneasy place of vanguardism in Lenin's post-1914 writings. As Dunayevskaya later commented, Lenin was never able to completely renounce vanguardism and this left him with an ambiguous legacy in regard to party organization.

Dunayevskaya's first "report" on her assigned studies was dated June 20, 1949. It is unlikely that she would have read James' previous letter; although it was dated June 19 subsequent sections were dated June 21, 1949. In other words, Dunayevskaya's letter was received and read by James before he sent-off his June 19/21 missive, meaning that she was unaware of his analysis and new sense of direction when she penned the June 20, 1949 letter. Nonetheless, her research and analysis furthered the goal of reading Lenin historically and in conjunction with other theoretical contributions in order to understand the world political economy of the pre-World War I and war-time era. Dunayevskaya began the letter with a critique of Kautsky—which is not surprising given that Lenin's *Imperialism* specifically targeted Kautsky's economic theory. For Dunayevskaya the point to be emphasized was that Kautsky's assessments had been generally accepted by post-Marx Marxism:

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[20] Archive #1636, underlining in original.

> All Marxists accept Kautsky's "Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx", which has not an ounce of dialectic, nor of contradiction in any concrete sense, and reaches no more than commodity production is not an individual, but a social type of production, and, abstractly, somehow socialism is the "next stage", historically only of course.[21]

Lenin's discussion of Kautsky was directed at Kautsky's treatment of imperialism – Kautsky viewed imperialism as an expression of state policy rather than a stage of capitalism.[22] Without expressly using the word "dialectic" Lenin's critique was also of the undialectical nature of Kautsky's theory:

> Kautsky's definition was: "Imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to bring under its control or to annex larger and larger areas of *agrarian* (Kautsky's italics) territory irrespective of what nations inhabit those regions." This definition is utterly worthless because it one-sidedly…singles out only the national question… . Imperialism is a striving for annexations – this is what the *political* part of Kautsky's definition amounts to. It is correct but very incomplete, for politically imperialism is, in general, a striving toward violence and reaction. …The inaccuracies in Kautsky's definition are glaring. The characteristic feature of imperialism is *not* industrial *but* finance capital.[23]

However, rather than polemicize directly against Kautsky, Dunayevskaya turned to relating the development of capitalism to Lenin's development philosophically which departed from the orthodoxy associated with Kautsky's approach. Over the course of six pages, she identified a number of key transitions in Lenin's thinking, while making linkages to transitions in capitalism and bourgeois thought. For example, she traced the emergence of the first billion dollar corporation in the United States (US Steel)[24] to the increasingly organized responses of the proletariat to the success of Marginal Utility theory in political economy:

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[21] Archive #1640.
[22] Lenin, *Imperialism,* p. 107.
[23] Lenin, *Imperalism,* p. 80, emphasis in original.

> Now to retrace a bit to see what the bourgeoisie was thinking. In America Carnegie's principle was "Pioneering doesn't pay." Empire building through consolidations, destruction, swallowing up did. The proletariat, as an unorganized mass, has its last stab against the empires that are and that will become greater in Homestead in 1898, and loses. US Steel appears. The first billion dollar corporation will be followed by many attempts on the part of the proletariat to greater organization which will finally result in the IWW in the US, in the Soviets in Russia, in the Zulu rebellion in Africa; as well it will develop and move into the 20th century's new industrial revolution (flight of Kitty Hawk, 1903) and new scientific concepts (Einstein's theory of relativity, 1905). …But the bourgeois economists… begin, first by attempts to destroy Marx once and for all. Again, a backward country begins a new theory for Austria was temporarily replaced England as home of the theoretician [sic]. Now the coincidence of Marginal Utilitarianism with imperialism plus its own subjective apologies led Marxists to reject it in an offhand manner as a psychological quirk. But it is no

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[24] US Steel makes the point clearly on its own behalf: "It was the world's first billion-dollar company, and its capitalization was equal to almost 7 percent of the country's GNP in 1901.

In a front-page article on the day following its incorporation, the *New York Tribune* described U. S. Steel as a "gigantic consolidation of steel companies." In its first year, U. S. Steel accounted for 67 percent of the steel production of the United States and 29 percent of the world's and quickly became known as 'The Corporation.'" US Steel Press Room. "USX Corporation Celebrates Centennial: The World's First Billion Dollar Company ." Web page, February 2001 [accessed 26 August 2006]. Available at http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/micro_stories.pl?ACCT=929150&TICK=X&STORY=/www/story/02-27-2001/0001436303&EDATE=Feb+27,+2001.

> psychological aberration; it is a very concrete, very much needed response to the beginnings of rationalized production.[25]

In addition to reviewing "what the bourgeoisie was thinking" there was an interesting reference to Luxemburg at this point in Dunayevskaya's consideration of Lenin's philosophical transformation. Up to this point the Tendency had criticized Luxemburg's theory of accumulation because it failed to understand the drive behind capitalist production and instead focused on consumption; however, in this letter Dunayevskaya credited Luxemburg's attempt to extend Marx's theory—even though this attempt ultimately failed:

> It should be said to Rosa's credit that at least she tried to see a connection between imperialism and production and accumulation of capital. Instead of trying to deduce it from the laws of capitalism as expressed in the decline in the rate of profit, she fell for the inductive method of history and ended up, as we know, revising Marx. But what I did not see before this was that she attempted to stick to Capital.[26]

According to Dunayevskaya's analysis, as offered in this letter, Lenin avoided Luxemburg's "error" by remaining concrete; thus, as we have seen argued previously, the commitment to a dialectical understanding of theory and practice assisted in avoiding the errors of a disembodied theory which was entirely abstract. Interestingly, Dunayevskaya suggested that Lenin's understanding of this relationship was derived from his Party experience rather than being rooted in production:

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[25] Archive #1641, underlining in original. Again, the actual discussion of Marginal Utility is outside our scope here; however, from the perspective of critical political economy, this is an interesting evaluation: "It [Marginal Utility] is based on mathematics and quantities and infinitesimal increments and decrements, and 'roundabout' machine production vs. alternate raw materials that can be used, plus point in production where it no longer pays to have another worker, 'final degree of utility'" (Archive #1641, underlining in original) . In other words, Dunayevskaya was suggesting that Marginal Utility was really another attempt to obscure the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Of course, the next major shift in economic theory was brought on almost entirely by the "decline" in profits resulting from the "1929 crash" – and the Keynesian "revolution" was launched.

[26] Archive #1642, underlining in original.

> While Lenin did not see this theoretically or concretely in production, he saw it most profoundly as tendencies in the party. Note the development in his concept of organization. First he sees it as politics vs. economics, and to that he adds professional revolutionary vs. intellectual anarchism. But 1905 comes. He sees creativeness or proletarian [sic] in creating Soviets, but he still counterposes party to that... .[27]

Thus, the 1905 Soviets were an important marker in Lenin's development, but he remained "stuck" counterposing a proletarian party to the peasants and masses. Then, in 1914 Lenin was faced with imperialist war and the demise of the Second International. Then Lenin returned to Hegel.

Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin's epistemology was fundamentally altered by his re-reading of Hegel, which had been spurred by objective world conditions:

> Now what springs out immediately, all through, and profoundly is the unity of opposites, the transition of one into its opposite... . Unity of opposites and transition fill the notebooks which are richer than the actual pamphlet on Imperialism. There is competition that became its opposite monopoly. They have not been overcome; they coexist. National wars can become imperialist wars, and vice versa. Dialectics is the theory of knowledge, not just a method in the sense of an instrument, which is the way pre-1914 Marxists thought of it, but the, the, the theory of knowledge [sic].[28]

Moreover, not only did the notion of the "unity of opposites" allow Lenin to see the coexistence of monopoly and competition, but, Dunayevskaya argued, it also shifted Lenin's concept of organization. As we have already noted, Lenin's pamphlet on imperialism posed the problem as a global or world concern; likewise, Lenin saw the need to organize the masses internationally and also "to a man." In other words, organization was posed as both a universal and an individual category. This concern with organization, however, was no longer reflected exclusively in the vanguard party but called a new form into existence that drew on many social forces for its revolutionary strength. Dunayevskaya argued that these transitions were most clearly reflected in Lenin's *State and Revolution* (1917).

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[27] Archive #1642, underlining in original.
[28] Archive #1643, underlining in original.

Although one may be tempted to argue at this point that the Johnson Forest tendency generally and Dunayevskaya specifically were attempting to read into Lenin's post-1914 works transitions and philosophical shifts that are more the product of wishful thinking than real change on the part of Lenin's philosophy, their work demonstrated great attentiveness to shifts in language and corroborating correspondence by Lenin that gave weight to the thesis being raised by the Tendency. Certainly, they were making a case to bolster their own state capitalist analysis, but more was at stake. Much more. This reading of Lenin demanded a different attentiveness to Marx's philosophical method than what was practiced generally among post-Marx Marxists. The result was that the categories of *Capital*, so oft referenced, such as the labour theory of value or the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, were not economic categories alone for the Tendency. They were, in fact, expressions of dialectical reasoning that was grounded for Marx in the materialist conception of history. This was Lenin's first insight in the philosophical notebooks – and that which informed the Tendency's treatment of post-Marx Marxism.[29]

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[29] Recall Lenin's statement in his philosophical studies that *Capital* cannot be understood without Hegel's *Science of Logic*, particularly the first chapter on the Commodity.

In order to move ahead with this analysis, Dunayevskaya closed her letter with the request that James sketch out a draft of the proposed manuscript. He obliged on June 24, 1949 with a specific outline and guidelines for writing major sections of the article. Again, the letter began with the premise that this will be forwarded to Marcuse; however, Marcuse was no longer the sole focus. As James noted: "I have it at the back of my head that it is the opportunity of a lifetime to do together the Logic of Hegel and the Logic of Capital. I believe that it is an open question which should appear first in the script."[30] The subsequent outline suggested by James is summarized below:

1. A study of the Logic: representing social development, the history of philosophy and scientific method;
2. A study of the Logic of Capital;
3. Early Marx and Dialectic;
4. Pre-1914 Lenin. Briefly summarizing Lenin on:
   a. Organization
   b. Capital (economics)
   c. Philosophy
   d. The Party
   e. Socialism;
5. Summary of what Lenin learned from the Logic; and,
6. Apply what Lenin learned from the Logic
   a. Imperialism
   b. March Revolution
   c. State and Revolution (weaving in organization, party, socialism, dialectic etc.).[31]

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[30] Archive #1646.
[31] Archive #1646.

As for writing advice, James suggested: "Aim at no more than 1200 words to each major section. Do not 'prove'. State. But if you state clearly enough and in correct sequence your proof is practically clear."[32] James continued the letter with further discussion and "pointers". He followed up on June 28, 1949, with further commentary which began with a (surprising) reminder that the Tendency must not "... forget that we must attack Hegelianism. For ex., Hegel says that only a few philosophizing men can overcome alienation. Wrong. The worker even under capitalism is twice blessed, in comparison with the philosophizers. I know that both objectively and subjectively."[33] James' correspondence continued on July 2, 1949. These letters are rich in content as far as James' thinking informed the Tendency's direction with regard to developing an outline for the article as well as a more general philosophy. It was, however, also the most sustained engagement by James as far as is recorded in Dunayevskaya's archives. In fact, after late August 1949, Dunayevskaya included very little other correspondence with James, if it was at all forthcoming.

July 1949

Dunayevskaya responded to James' June/July correspondence July 6, 1949. This letter refined the ideas she first outlined June 20, 1949. In his previous letter (June 28), James highlighted three concepts that distinguished post-1914 Lenin. Briefly, these were: (1) monopoly as both a new category for capitalism and as an absolute; (2) that time needed to be devoted to understanding Lenin's discussions of the socialization of labour – how was Lenin using this category?; (3)Lenin's search for a new form of democracy as an opposite to monopoly which James argued "The real opposite to capitalism is democracy."[34] Dunayevskaya focused on monopoly as the new Absolute and socialization of labour also having reached a point of transition in this stage of capitalism. At the great risk of oversimplification, the sense here was that capitalism and its socializing effects on labour had "run out"; that is, reached a place of culmination and transformation. The letter concluded with a tabulation of Dunayevskaya's key findings. The table reproduced below summarizes her conclusions:

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[32] Archive #1646. Arguably, one of Dunayevskaya's more interesting insights derived from her study of Lenin's work on imperialism related to the falling rate of profit; yet, James dispensed with this: "I will forget for the time being the falling r of p. We are dealing with Lenin" (Archive #1646). Again, while not directly addressed by Dunayevskaya, the coming philosophical split appears to have rested on very concrete ground.

[33] Archive #1651.

Pre-1914	Post-1914
Nothing new in imperialism; a Marxist catchword	Clutches Engels' attack on abstraction; links the concrete imperialism to monopoly
Sees no new phase of capitalism; cartels, trusts etc. "forms" of large-scale production	Monopoly as new category; phase of capitalism appearing after death of Marx
Socialization of labour as end	Socialization of labour as a transition to something higher
Opportunism due to Russian backwardness or peaceful character of capitalist development	Opportunism the result of monopoly which creates an aristocracy of labour; need to go deeper
Self-determination as principle of socialism	Imperialism creates an urgency on questions of self-determination due to division of world
Dialectics cast instrumentally	Dialectics as the theory of knowledge; sees self-movement of the workers

Table 2: Dunayevskaya's Comparison of pre-1914 Lenin and post-1914 Lenin.[35]

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[34] Archive #1651-1652.

[35] Summarized from Archive #1673. Again, this letter singled out Luxemburg's difference from other Marxists: "Rosa Luxemburg is the only one who creates a new category out of the creative energies of the Russian proletariat, but she will turn this general strike or spontaneous organization of the masses into an absolute way of

The letter of July 6 represented the consolidation of Dunayevskaya's arguments to date with regard to Lenin's philosophical leaps and transformations. However, what has not yet been discussed was Dunayevskaya's use of secondary sources to facilitate her reading of Hegel. In the period under consideration here, we find that Dunayevskaya also returned to sources cited by Lenin for purposes of clarification. In her letter, She recounted a particularly salient quote from Ivan Ilyin's *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine Concreteness of God and Man*, she quoted:

> "The first and fundamental thing that one who wishes adequately to understand and master the philosophic teachings of Hegel must do is explain to oneself his relation to the concrete empiric world." And a little below: "... the term 'concrete' comes from the Latin word, 'concrescere'. 'Crescere' means 'to grow'; 'concrescere' – coalescence, to arise through growth. Accordingly, to Hegel "concrete means first of all srashcheniye (growing together) ... ."[36]

Dunayevskaya argued that this opening in Ilyin's book typified what Lenin saw in Hegel in 1914. "Now it is this type of empiric-concrete world that Lenin, in reorganizing his whole method of thought went searching for in the study of imperialism and the why of the collapse of the Second."[37] Effectively, Dunayevskaya had dispensed with any remaining doubt that Hegel was merely an "Idealist" whose philosophic contribution should be discounted by any "good materialist".

Before leaving this remarkable letter, it should be noted that Dunayevskaya again linked monopoly to the tendency of the rate of profit to decline; in fact, this was the source of self-movement that Lenin identified as the core of Hegel's dialectical method

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overcoming bureaucratic leaderships" (Archive #1668). Dunayevskaya's attraction to elements of Luxemburg's analysis are clearly evident in these early considerations of Luxemburg's work.

[36] Archive #1670.

[37] Archive #1670.

(that is, contradiction); moreover, from the falling rate of profit she drew a link to James' call to consider democratic form:

> What law of motion does [Lenin] draw out from his new absolute, monopoly capitalism? He says the tendency of monopoly is to decay and stagnation. Now Marx drew from his tendency to decline in rate of profit a certain conclusion: degradation of the proletariat. Lenin draws from his tendency of decay and stagnation two things: (1)Decay and stagnation, rotting alive, abolishes differences in political forms and democracy (and remain alive only if the proletarian transforms into its absolute; [sic] (2)Decay and stagnation means deprivation of liberty and self-determination of nations acquires a new "urgency".[38]

Boggs was the first to respond to James and Dunayevskaya following the July 6 letter. She began her response to James with a hand-written note praising the July 6 letter. Her own work at this time was focused on the relationship between Lenin and Bukharin, of which she provided a philosophical analysis. James subsequently criticized her letter as being off point, however, one element bears highlighting here. Although Dunayevskaya linked a loss of liberty with monopoly, Boggs made a much more explicit statement about freedom in this letter: "I am writing these notes with the Logic and with Lenin's notes on the Notion before me. In both you sense this plunge into Freedom. You have to sense it and to feel that every great step forward in philosophic cognition was made only when a new category, a new way of making the plunge into freedom became possible."[39] This letter by Boggs, like many of those in the archives, was significantly marked up by Dunayevskaya—likely the result of many re-readings. She specifically underlined and circled the statement "plunge into freedom". In her letter Boggs acknowledged "What I am trying to say here is not at all precise, but I feel quite sure that it is on the right road."[40] Although Dunayevskaya was evidently intrigued by the appearance of Freedom in their correspondence, James began his response by noting that "[Boggs'] letter on Bukharin [the ostensible subject-matter of Boggs' letter] disappointed me. Some of the material was precious but the whole thing seemed to me off track."[41] Rather than engage the breadth of philosophical ideas being raised by Boggs' analysis, James' overwhelming concern was that they be able to precisely "prove" their interpretation of Lenin's transformation. This was the second letter in which James chided Boggs for being off-track or "abstract"; yet, one is left with the unmistakable impression that these "abstractions", provided by Boggs, assisted in driving Dunayevskaya to ever deeper analysis. In subsequent letters Dunayevskaya praised Boggs' philosophical contributions to the Tendency. In her first book-length work, *Marxism and Freedom*, for example, we find Dunayevskaya arguing that if Marxism is not about Freedom, then it stands for nothing.

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[38] Archive #1671, underlining in original. Note, this is the first link to a discussion of freedom, which Boggs will make more explicit in her next letter. For Dunayevskaya, the embodied idea of freedom will take on particular theoretical weight in her first published work, *Marxism and Freedom* (1958).

[39] Archive #1676.

Dunayevskaya circulated her next letter on July 20, 1949, addressed specifically to James. In this letter she endeavored to refine the transition in Lenin. In order to do this, she moved past the pamphlet on imperialism to give greater consideration to *State and Revolution* and the concept of self-determination as outlined by Lenin in his *April Theses*.[42] Dunayevskaya revisited the same themes from her previous two letters and followed this with further commentary on July 25, 1949. It is easiest to follow the development of Dunayevskaya's argument by examining the letters of July 25 and 29 as if they were a single contribution to the philosophical conversation between Boggs, Dunayevskaya and James.

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[40] Archive #1676.

[41] Archive #1678.

[42] The first edition of *State and Revolution* was published August 1917 and the second edition, December 1918. Lenin ended the first edition with a post-script noting: "This

As we have previously encountered, Dunayevskaya began this correspondence by again highlighting Lenin's "discovery" of self-movement as the core of Hegelianism – a core that she argued was precisely grasped by Marx. Lenin's discovery of the dialectic, constructed, as movement and self-movement, made "... clear, painfully so, that dialectic simply was no part of Marxism, 1889-1914" – that is, among those who claimed the mantle of Marxism after Marx's death.[43] Moreover, now convinced that Lenin grasped the meaning of "unity of opposites" when confronted with the formation of Soviets, Dunayevskaya concluded that there were two key periods of Lenin's development (post-1914). The first period she identified as August 1914 – February 1917. In this period, Lenin took up the philosophical study that enabled him to write about dialectics and to produce the study on imperialism. However, Dunayevskaya argued that in this period Lenin also "... lived in the realm of essence."[44] She goes on, noting:

> Of course he takes up the unity of opposites in imperialism and in the disputes on self-determination, but it is the unity of opposites

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pamphlet was written in August and September 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh, chapter, 'The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.' But except for the title I had no time to write a single line of the chapter; I was 'interrupted' by a political crisis – the eve of the October Revolution of 1917. Such an 'interruption' can only be welcomed; but the writing of the second part of the pamphlet... will probably have to be put off for a long time. It is more pleasant and useful to go through the 'experience of revolution' than to write about it" (Vladimir Il ich Lenin, *The State and the Revolution* (Peking : Foreign Language Press, 1976), p. 147.).

[43] Archive #1679.

[44] Archive #1679.

> within the notion of capitalism; he has not yet concretized the mediation; he is for civil war and break-up of the capitalist state but he can only use generalities for the new society.[45]

In other words, Lenin was not able to move to Notion, that is a new Absolute.

However, Dunayevskaya's recount did not end at February 1917, but moved to what she identified as the second period of transition for Lenin. This "transition" was brought about, according to Dunayevskaya, by the reappearance of Soviets in 1917. Now, the mediation that was missing in Lenin's previous discussions and writings was made apparent to him through the concrete activity of the workers:

> With Feb. 1917 – when he recognizes the Soviets as mediation and at the same time sees that the opposition between method – proletarian – and aim – socialism – has been overcome and proletarian revolution and soviet state is content and method and form and all can be summed up in the one expression "to a man" he arrives at State and Revolution or method is pure notion.[46]

In other words, Lenin had moved from Essence to Notion – realizing the potential for a new absolute in the practice of the proletariat (which Dunayevskaya will later remind us is a form of theory in and of itself). The remainder of the letter further documented Dunayevskaya's sense of the Lenin's transitions. She closed the letter, however, on a hesitant note. As she recorded: "At this point too many new ideas are floating about, and we have expanded so much that I am not sure I have a view of the whole. It seems to me that it would be around about now to meet and discuss and then to draft. But if you think I should try a dig at it now, I will, but I feel rather incomplete."[47]

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[45] Archive #1679.

[46] Archive #1679. Ironically, it is the case that by the close of 1951, Dunayevskaya also lives in the "realm of Essence" – even though she had discussed monopoly as a new Absolute in Lenin's work, her own philosophical engagement with what this meant did not occur until 1953. Moreover, it is questionable if moving to Absolute does effectively answer Dunayevskaya's criticism here that the new society remains a generality.

Dunayevskaya's letter of July 25, 1949 examined more directly the intervening period between Lenin's *Imperialism* and the writing of *State and Revolution*. Specifically, she referenced Lenin's "April Theses" in which Lenin articulated his "personal theses" with regard to the proletariat.[48] Dunayevskaya began by noting: "Lenin's philosophic leap from materialist evolution to dialectic revolution coincides with the Russian proletariat's coming of age through methodology (St. Petersburg Soviet, 1905) to unity of methodology and content (1917 Soviets)."[49] She went on to prove this "leap" in the context of the "April Theses":

> It is as simple as all that: the practice of the proletariat and the peasantry demands a certain type of preaching of socialism. Note the stages of his April Report: (1)the purely practical measure of the peasants demands the nationalization of the land, ... (2)We preach socialism. (3)The miner practices it. He is not interested who is his president; but how to run production and distribute bread. That same thesis moves us from monopoly to state control and the difference between that and workers control in the same manner as his thesis on imperialism moved us from bourgeois to proletarian democracy.[50]

Practically, Dunayevskaya argued the "April Theses" led to *State and Revolution* which led to a position supporting national self-determination. For Lenin, then, the idea of self-determination constituted a method or practice which would lead to revolutionary change (while not revolutionary in and of itself):

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[47] Archive #1682.
[48] Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," *Collected Works*, vol. 24, pp. 20-26.
[49] Archive #1683.
[50] Archive #1683, underlining in original.

> First to be noted is that out of Imperialism flowed the new urgency for self-determination as a fight which will bring out broad masses in the fight with the imperialist bourgeoisie which would in turn bring the socialist proletariat on the historic scene, the Soviet type of state there would flow not only proletarian democracy but proletarian internationalism.[51]

In other words, Dunayevskaya was arguing that self-determination when practiced in conjunction with proletarian democracy is transformed into its opposite: proletarian internationalism.

At this point, Dunayevskaya highlighted another aspect of Hegel's dialectic and that Lenin's application of the dialectic was becoming more sophisticated:

> The relationship between socialism and democracy in the epoch of imperialism brings forth another aspect of Hegelian dialectic – manifoldness, many-sidedness, totality. ... therefore the fight for democracy is the fight to smash the state. State and Revolution simply must be written now. The proletariat is also readying to make this connection between democracy and revolution in the annals of history.[52]

Ultimately, Dunayevskaya recorded:

> The schema of movement from workers control to workers administration, or beginnings of reconstruction of society is the harder job than the smashing of the state and the true movement from essence to subjectivity and freedom, and this point is emphasized in the last of Lenin and in his fights with Bukharin… .[53]

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[51] Archive #1684, underlining in original.

[52] Archive #1685, underlining in original.

[53] Archive #1686. This letter, July 25, 1949, appears to be incomplete as it ends mid-sentence; however, its philosophical depth is apparent even without its concluding elements. The schema being referenced here is drawn form Hegel's construction of the movement from Universal to Particular to Individual (U-P-I) in the Notion; that is the self-movement of the dialectic. In this letter, Dunayevskaya addressed U-P-I as: "The Universality of Socialism will assume the Particularity of Soviets and concretize itself into the Individuality of population 'to a man'" (Archive #1686). At the same time, in a kind of double-movement: "State and Revolution… moves the 'workers control' over the

Dunayevskaya's account of Lenin leads to the conclusion that the bureaucratic capitalist state theory cannot be justified from this reading of Lenin. Moreover, we see Dunayevskaya's focus on democracy and freedom as attributes of a successful revolution were drawn from this particular philosophical reading of Lenin.

August – September 1949

Boggs took up Hegel's Notion and the Absolute Idea in a significant way in two letters dated July 29 and August 16, 1949. The letters were addressed to James but were obviously copied to Dunayevskaya as well. In her letter of July 29, Boggs began by linking the Absolute Idea to revolution. Early in the letter she queried: "Is it too much to think that we and Lenin would have substituted the word Revolution, permanent revolution, every time Hegel used the word Absolute Idea?"[54] She further noted:

> He [Hegel] is going to tell us how all revolutions move by negativity... . ... He goes on to say that up to now we have understood what the Notion is but now we have to see that the Notion is everything and that its movement is the universal and

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capitalist to universal control which is the foundation of socialism and 'withers away' [because] it becomes 'administration of things'" (Archive #1686). The resulting "unity" formed from this self-movement is a new absolute. However, these ideas are not addressed until Boggs writes more specifically on the Notion, August 16, 1949. What should be kept in mind here, though, is Dunayevskaya's desire to read Hegel's Notion in Lenin's works. Her focus on the Notion and Absolute Idea separates her philosophical work in subsequent years from other Marxist and Hegelian scholars. For a recent debate between Chris Arthur and Kevin Anderson, see: Chris Arthur. "Dunayevskaya's Power of Negativity: a critique." Web page, February 2006-March 2006 [accessed 25 June 2006]. Available at http://www.newsandletters.org/Issues/2006/Feb-Mar/PhilD_Feb-Mar_06.htm; and Kevin Anderson. "Philosophy and revolution as equal partners: Response to Arthur's critique of Dunayevskaya." Web page, February 2006-March 2006. Available at http://www.newsandletters.org/Issues/2006/Feb-Mar/PhilDResp_Feb-Mar_06.htm.

[54] Archive #1688, underlining in original.

> absolute activity, the self-determining and self-realizing movement.[55]

While Boggs' treatment of the Absolute Idea and Absolute Method[56] was abstract, she at all times was reading Hegel as a revolutionary. She closed this letter with a series of excerpts from the *Science of Logic* which demonstrated the self-movement, that is, the dialectical moment, envisioned in Hegel's Absolute Method. Not surprisingly, freedom again appeared in the "second negative"; quoting directly from Hegel she emphasized:

> "The second negative, the negative of the negative, which we have reached, is the transcendence of the contradiction, but is no more the activity of an external reflection than the contradiction is; it is the innermost and most objective movement by virtue of which a subject is personal and free."[57]

Following her July 29 letter on August 16, Boggs began by contextualizing Hegel's place with respect to subjective vs. institutional idealism. She argued that Hegel's focus on negativity as a mechanism of self-movement caused Hegel to stand apart from previous philosophy:

> Hegel, as we know, represented what we can call the principle of permanent revolution, or self-movement by constantly developing negativity. We can elaborate this further by calling it a conception of development which is always at its goal and which is nevertheless in constant self-movement by negativity.[58]

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[55] Archive #1688-1689, underlining in original.

[56] "Note that he is talking about Method, i.e. the form of the Absolute Idea, i.e. the new stage of identity of theory and practice which we have reached, and not just previous forms of cognition [e.g. Being and Essence]"(Archive #1689).

[57] Quoting Hegel, Archive #1690, underlining in original. Hegel's dialectic always contains two negatives in order for contradiction (and ultimately, sublation) to be realized. The first negative is the "simple point of negative self-relation" and the second is the negation of that negative self-relation. See Archive #1690.

[58] Archive #1692.

From here, Boggs moved to a discussion of the movement from the Universal to the Particular, which Hegel also introduced in the Subjective Logic, "The Doctrine of the Notion". While Dunayevskaya had made reference to Lenin's use of this schema,it was in this letter that Boggs really engaged the revolutionary and philosophical significance of it. As she first outlined it:

> In order that this general movement should immediately have a less esoteric meaning, we can roughly characterize these three stages as:
>
> Universal – immediate unity of opposites or a given situation which is the result of a previous revolution
> Particular – critical period of opposition of forces, or mediation and negation in preparation for a revolution
> Individual – the revolution itself.[59]

Boggs' relation of this logic of movement to revolution was in keeping with the Tendency's goal to read Hegel for "their time". She also offered a more general overview in order to make the construction of the schema more meaningful:

> ... the movement of the Logic in general form from the:
>
> Universal – immediate unity of opposites, the indeterminate
> to the Particular – mediation of opposites, first negation, determination
> to the Individual – unity of opposites or negation of negation in which the subject is an immediate which has overcome mediation.[60]

The remainder of the letter took up other philosophical traditions (such as Leibniz and Spinoza) but also drew out some broad generalizations which were a consequence of tracing the logical movement from Universal to Individual. Boggs' own words are worth quotation here:

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[59] Archive #1692.
[60] Archive #1692.

> (1)The ultimate, the goal to which the whole logical development moves, is the revolution, the individual, and these are Hegel's chief concerns. Individuality, revolution, self-determination, self-activity can all be regarded as more or less equivalent terms so long as we realize that there are stages of revolution, individuality, self-determination and self-activity (For this reason the less controversial term personality might be substituted for individuality).
>
> (2)Individuality and revolution is the result of the overcoming of particularity. It is a self-relation arrived at by the negation of negation. This process of U-P-I cannot be over-emphasized. The diametrically opposed conception of idealist philosophers – which lurks in ambush for everybody who doesn't have this process clear—is that the individual is a mode, a limitation, a negation, a determination (i.e. the first negation) of the universal and therefore finite. This is the philosophic root of all totalitarianism. ...
>
> (3)Since precisely this achievement of self-relation is the revolution, all stages of the succeeding revolutions must and can be looked for precisely at those nodal points in the Logic where individuality overcomes particularity.[61]

In the final substantive paragraph of this letter, rather than remaining abstract, Boggs attempted to clarify the major sections of the *Logic*. Bearing in mind that in an earlier exchange with Dunayevskaya[62] Boggs had been cautious about filling Hegel's categories with "class content", she now suggested that the discussion of commodities, for example, corresponded to the Realm of Being and that labour is a key mediation that can be read as the Realm of Essence. She concluded:

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[61] Archive #1693-94. Boggs demonstrated this third generalization by reference to Being. In this "nodal point" of the *Science of Logic*, she argued, the same movement can be traced from Hegel's Quality (a Universal) to Quantity (a Particular) to Measure (an Individual – but she cautioned, not yet Essence). See: Archive #1695.

[62] January 5, 1949, Archive #9210, Dunayevskaya proposed to collaborate with Boggs on an article on *Capital* and its dialectical structure. There was a brief exchange in which Boggs advised Dunayevskaya to be wary of filling in the "logical categories of Hegel with specific class content" (Archive #9222); Dunayevskaya did argue, however, for a deepening of the application of the Hegelian dialectic with particular reference to limit and barrier to "...achieve the true dialectic of the general contradiction of capitalism" (Archive #9222).

> I have in mind here the way in which 1)Marx links Liberty, Equality and Bentham with the market and 2)the basic [word obscured in original] conception which he had of the ever-deepening (increasing concrete universality) development of human freedom – from Christianity to political democracy – the concept of economic or industrial democracy—and perhaps other stages of freedom.[63]

While Boggs was filling Hegel's categories with class content, her focus on Being and Essence is less interesting (and much more debatable) than the emerging theme of human freedom.

James replied to Boggs' letter on August 25, 1949, apparently pleased with the overall progress the Tendency was making in understanding the structure and key elements of Hegel's philosophy. Typical of James, he still found a point of critique with Boggs' work. While on the one hand directing Dunayevskaya to pay close attention to the sections on U-P-I, he noted: "I do not like the phrasing in the letter [Boggs' letter of August 16, 1949] – too much revolution, and too little of the patience and the suffering of the negative, but the root of the matter is there."[64] James further commented on Boggs' letter on August 29, 1949. Again, he highlighted his concern with the use of revolution:

> Para. 7: "Universal, immediate unity…revolution." I do not like the word revolution. I prefer "leap" or some inoffensive term. Politically, it is a revolution. Aufhebung (a big one) is the term, isn't it? Same para: "Individual – the revolution itself." I can't accept that phrase. The term I think of is the concrete, the actual, the emergence of something new. But whatever you use, keep away from revolution.[65]

It appears contradictory that James was so opposed to Boggs' use of "revolution"; however, it was in keeping with his previous concern about the abstract nature of Boggs' work; however, the "concrete" reason appeared to have much to do with the intended audience for the Tendency's work, as he noted: "[in regard to specific quotations from Hegel] The paragraphs are, for the ordinary man, unreadable. Unreadable. We, you, will have to describe the process more simply. And here a big point. We write for the average intelligent worker."[66] James suggested that a classic example of negation of negation (the second negative discussed by Boggs) was to be found in Marx's discussion of the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation.[67] James then presented his own take on *Capital's* relationship to Hegel's categories. He outlined the structure as follows:

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[63] Archive #1695.
[64] Archive #1696.
[65] Archive #1698.

> There is not doubt (to me) that Being = early society up to capitalism. Essence = capitalism to the classical philosophy. The Absolute Idea is the Method. …Hegel could discover no more than method, tho [sic] this for him was a prelude to action (in a subordinate way). But Marx could not stop at exposition of the "Notion". For him the "Notion" was directly connected, linked to action, and action by masses of men, not the few philosophers.[68]

From here, James moved to an explicit disagreement with Boggs' characterization of the major sections of the *Logic* as related to *Capital*.[69] Ultimately, Boggs argued that the stages of movement developed by Hegel were best understood as the development of "human freedom".[70] James clearly viewed this as a dubious reading of Hegel, he wrote:

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[66] Archive #1698. James' faith in the understanding of the average worker, I think, mirrors Dunayevskaya's belief later articulated through *News and Letters*, that these "philosophical ideas" were important and accessible to those whose social relations were oppressively structured by capitalism (subjectivities that include race, age, orientation, prisoners, gender – in addition to "worker").
[67] James singled out this chapter from volume I in his June 19, 1949 letter (Archive #1630 – 1639) to Boggs to demonstrate the link to Lenin's *Imperialism*.
[68] Archive #1699, underlining in original.
[69] See Archive #1695 and the previous discussion of "filling" Hegel's categories with class content.
[70] Archive #1695.

> E.g. in Being you see the development from abstract individuality through political equality to political democracy (a synthesis). Maybe. Maybe. But start right now avoiding the practice of making Hegel write as if he had politics in mind. ... To make it all "revolution" serves no purpose. We shall apply it to politics, to society.[71]

James closed the letter with some additional comments with regard to Lenin's pre-1914 error. He noted again that Dunayevskaya was working on tracing the changes in Lenin's thinking and making appropriate links between Lenin's philosophical studies and concrete historical circumstances. Dunayevskaya responded with a letter on August 30, 1949, which we will examine in detail in the next Chapter. What is significant at this point was that she closed this letter with a note of support for Boggs' letters and overall philosophical contribution:

> Her [Boggs] last [letter] on U-P-I was magnificent and I dropped her a note on that as soon as I received [sic]. The reason, however, I wish to re-record it here for everybody is that until this correspondence on Lenin's Notebooks I did not fully appreciate [Boggs] philosophic contribution, whereas now I breathe so freely on that fact that I am "for" her even when you [James] are "against".[72]

For the sake of closing the "argument" as it was resolved between Boggs and James, we will examine Boggs' response, dated September 4, 1949 before returning to Dunayevskaya's August 30, 1949 letter in Chapter Nine.[73] Boggs indicated in her letter that she had received James' comments and hoped that these notes would alleviate his concerns. She further noted that her letter was not penned as a rebuttal *per se*, but merely represented the continuation and expansion of her work.[74] Such a response is in keeping with the other interactions between either Dunayevskaya and James or James and Boggs. Rarely does it appear that James was challenged "head on" by members of the Tendency. On the one hand, this demonstrated a level of respect and civility; on the other, it left emerging philosophical differences under-investigated and under-engaged. Boggs did, however, in some small way respond to James' previous critiques. For example, her response on the use of the term "revolution", while not direct, made a significant point:

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[71] Archive #1699, underlining in original. It is likely that James' refusal to see a "political" Hegel was due to his own unfamiliarity with Hegel's political writings. For a later discussion see: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, T. M Knox, and Z. A Pelczynski, *Hegel's Political Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

[72] Archive #1706.

[73] Dunayevskaya's archives contain no further correspondence initiated by James after his August 29, 1949 letter. In later years, Dunayevskaya commented that James did not respond to her "Hegel letters" in May 1953; however, it is not clear if it is the case that James ceased replying to letters or if the record as preserved by Dunayevskaya is simply

> These new categories [Hegel's *Science of Logic*] arise at certain moments in history when men have the conviction that they are already in full possession of the truth (I whisper in an aside that these are moments of revolution and that only revolutions can produce such universals).[75]

Perhaps even more to the point, Boggs ended this "tongue-in-cheek" paragraph by referring James to his own *Notes on Dialectics*.

Having gently made her "defense" on the use of "revolution", Boggs moved on to the substance of the matter; that is, the contestation of how Hegel's categories can be understood concretely. In her previous letter, Boggs had highlighted the two stages of negation as the key to the dialectic. James' response failed to engage this "double movement" and instead instructed Boggs to make a re-examination of Chapter 32 (the Historical Tendency of Capital Accumulation) of *Capital* as "[t]he classic example of

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incomplete. It is clear that the Tendency did continue to work together and publish joint works until the split in 1955.

[74] Archive #1707.

[75] Archive #1707.

negation of negation" – which she noted she would do once she had access again to her German edition of *Capital*.[76]

Returning to Hegel's schema, Boggs did an excellent job of clarifying Hegel's "philosophic point". First on Universal-Particular-Individual she noted its place in all of Hegel's categories of logic:

> …Hegel always began with a universal, e.g. Being as such, Essence as such, the Notion as such, using Universal as the immediate identity of the concept with itself. What distinguishes these universals from the generalizations of abstract understanding is that each of them is a new category, a leap, an I, which is the result of a previous process of UPI and therefore in turn the beginning of another process of UPI.[77]

Boggs further highlighted that it was this movement through Universal-Particular-Individual that must be understood as resulting from contradiction. However, contradiction is itself a two-stage process; from first negation (external reflection) to the second negation (the negation of the negation).[78]

Boggs continued this letter with an argument for reading the revolt of the worker as the second negation; however, she utilized the closing paragraph to once more reinforce the revolutionary potential she read in Hegel's philosophy:

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[76] Archive #1699. Surprisingly, James also instructed Boggs to use Engels' "Dialectics of Nature" as a model (Archive #1699). While Engels' incomplete essay does "distill" dialectics, it seems odd to reference it over Lenin's much more detailed and extensive Notebooks. This strikes the reader as an instance in which James simply did not "get it". Engels certainly wrote of the importance of "negation of negation" in the document but the two stages of negativity raise a richer and deeper engagement with Hegel. Perhaps the most honest statement made by James about Boggs' work was that it was "…a mixture of good exposition and difficult Hegelianism" (Archive #1699). One is inclined to trust his judgment of the exposition but to raise an eyebrow with regard to his assessment of Hegelianism.

[77] Archive #1707.

[78] Archive #1708.

> Insofar, however, as we are stage by stage going to use the absolutely revolutionary movement of Hegel, i.e. the dialectic of negativity but showing this is not a way or manner, but in the concrete revolutionary development, then when we reach Absolute Method, we will reach the permanent revolution, to the extent that the historian of the mass movement can do so and the historian of philosophy cannot. I don't think that there is a real difficulty here … [between Boggs and James].[79]

Conclusion

In the brief three months covered by this Chapter, it is apparent that the Johnson Forest tendency was on the cusp of many theoretical "breakthroughs"; it is also apparent that there were brewing significant differences in emphasis between Dunayevskaya, Boggs, and James. Although the next Chapter will delve into the application of these Hegel studies to Marx's *Capital*, pursued by Dunayevskaya, the groundwork for that application was laid in the philosophical discussions undertaken between June and August 1949. Interestingly, Boggs and Dunayevskaya demonstrated much more of a philosophical affinity at this point than James and Boggs or Dunayevskaya and James. Both women appeared intent on grasping the revolutionary nature of Hegel's philosophy while James remained much more concerned with "attacking Hegelianism". This being said, it appears that Boggs was much more confident in the more abstract elements of philosophy than in the attempts, driven by James and Dunayevskaya, to concretize Hegelian thought in immediate, concrete examples. Nonetheless, as acknowledged by Dunayevskaya, Boggs philosophical treatments of very difficult concepts from Hegel's philosophical system were lucid and helpful, forcing the Tendency's analysis to reach deeper into philosophy to engage the relationship between Freedom and Revolution.[80] Admittedly, the role of Freedom and the place of revolution were still tentative at this point in the Tendency's work (and will only be later revisited by Dunayevskaya after her break with James; although a key moment of breakthrough occurred in 1953 and is the subject of Chapter 10).

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[79] Archive #1710.

Before turning to the re-reading of *Capital* that Dunayevskaya undertook in the months following the letters discussed in this Chapter, it is important to keep in mind the elements of discovery that were realized between June and August 1949. First, as assigned by the Tendency, Dunayevskaya undertook a serious examination of Lenin's work to determine the points at which he made a significant transition in thought. The Tendency was among the first Marxist group to identify Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* as a fundamental change in post-Marx Marxist theory. From her study, Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin underwent two periods of transition. The first period she identified was 1914 – 1917, at which time Lenin undertook his philosophical study and engagement in a meaningful way with Hegelian dialectics. No longer did Lenin contrast Hegelian Idealism with Marxist Materialism. From the time of his engagement with Hegel's *Science of Logic* in 1914 he argued that dialectics were the source of movement and self-movement and the key to understanding Marx's theoretical works, most specifically *Capital*. Drawing from Hegel's notion of the "unity of opposites", Lenin developed the concept of monopoly capitalism in the age of imperialism. At the same time that Lenin argued that capitalism was defined by a coexistence (an interpenetration) of competitive and monopoly capitalism, he also noted that the proletariat was increasingly ruled by a "labour bureaucracy", an "opposite" to the socialization of labour.

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[80] Although perhaps not what he intended, I must acknowledge that this aspect of Freedom and Revolution only became clear to me in light of a very provocative question posed to me by Dr. Roger Epp in the context of a presentation about Dunayevskaya's work.

Dunayevskaya identified Lenin's second transition as occurring in 1917 as a result of the appearance of workers' Soviets in Russia. This spontaneous organizational form caused Lenin to "see" democracy as the opposite to capitalism. The smashing of the state and the transcendence of the vanguard party culminated in the "April Theses", *State and Revolution*, and in his contribution to the Trade Union debates of 1920-21. Thus, Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin was first driven to philosophy by objective world conditions (the failed 1905 Russian revolution, the collapse of the Second International, and war) and from philosophy he was able to understand the concrete activity of workers as a new form of practice and organization (his second transition).

Dunayevskaya's identification of these two transitions in Lenin's thought was assisted by Boggs' work on Hegel's schema, the movement of Universal to Particular to Individual. As discussed in the Chapter, James did not agree with Boggs' assertion that revolutions were the historical force moving from one universal to another; however, all seemed to be in agreement that Lenin had identified a new Absolute in monopoly capitalism. The assertion of a new Absolute moved the Tendency from Hegel's category of Essence to the Doctrine of the Notion. However, while it was generally acknowledged by all three that this was a new epistemology for Lenin, the discussion of the meaning of a new Absolute, that is, a new category of capitalism, was lost somewhat in the more theoretical discussion on the U-P-I schema. Thus, the naming of a new Absolute was little more than an assertion at this point in the discussion. Although it remained tentative in the discussion up to the end of August 1949, it is important to mark here that the Absolute had been identified as a key category to be pursued from Hegel's philosophical system.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the philosophical work being undertaken by the Tendency was always being legitimized by the retracing of an intellectual lineage from Marx to Lenin to the Johnson Forest tendency. In the table summarized from both Dunayevskaya's and James' work, there was a definite attempt to demonstrate how the Tendency was furthering Marx's analysis in light of current-day circumstances. While the facile reading of this would be simply to say that the Tendency was making an attempt to claim a "true" Marxism, it was more than a need to be "right" that drove the assertion. Rather, I believe, the Tendency was attempting to demonstrate the immediacy and relevance of Marx's analysis as a philosophical orientation that lead to a significantly different understanding of world-conditions if followed in its dialectical method. Lenin's post-revolution theory was significantly altered by his re-reading of philosophy and, likewise, the Tendency found itself in disagreement with most of international Trotskyism and orthodox Marxism of the day. For Dunayevskaya, Marxist Humanism will result from the philosophical engagement with Marx. In order to further lay the ground work for her philosophical break with James and Boggs, the next Chapter takes-up the application of Hegel's dialectics by Dunayevskaya in a revolutionary re-reading of Marx's *Capital*.

Chapter Nine

(re)Reading Capital

Introduction

At the close of the previous Chapter, our examination of the Johnson Forest tendency focused on the investigation of the relationship between Hegel's dialectics and Lenin's transitions. Although James in particular demonstrated a certain philosophical resistance to Boggs' linkage of Hegel's discussion of freedom to revolution, he voiced his fear that the discussion was overly philosophical and beyond the reach of the "ordinary man". However, as we noted, it was in the course of this same discussion that Dunayevskaya acknowledged the value and depth of Boggs' contribution to the Tendency. Significantly, it is Boggs' outline of Hegel's movement from Universal-Particular-Individual that inspired Dunayevskaya's praise. It is from this point forward (August 30, 1949) that Dunayevskaya never departs from the practice of relating Hegel's philosophy to Marx's *Capital*. And, as to James' argument that the discussion was moving beyond the grasp of ordinary workers, this is a position that Dunayevskaya never accepted. In fact, after leaving the Tendency, she pursued the Hegel/Marx relationship and continued to keep philosophical debates at the fore of the worker-edited paper, *News and Letters*.

The above being said, I do not mean to suggest in any way that previous to the August 1949 correspondence that Dunayevskaya rejected or contested the assertion that there was a relationship between Hegel and Marx in *Capital*. Rather, I do mean to suggest that this relationship increasingly becomes the focus of her thinking and writing. Moreover, from 1949 forward she was able to cast her own "philosophy of revolution" from within a framework of human freedom—effectively solidifying the humanist element of her Marxism even prior to her naming it Marxist Humanism. With this in mind, the Chapter begins by returning to Dunayevskaya's August 30, 1949 letter to James. The letter, in essence, finalized the discussion on Lenin's development while it also demonstrated Dunayevskaya's new insights derived from the application of dialectical thinking to Marx's *Capital.*[1] Following her August 30, 1949 letter, the archives contain only two more letters in 1949. Both are penned by Dunayevskaya, one was addressed to CLR (October 5, 1949) and the other to Boggs (October 12, 1949). The focus of these letters departed from the investigation of Lenin's theoretical development in order to further her own, new insights into *Capital*. As had been her practice when investigating Lenin, these letters demonstrate an attentiveness to Marx's historical development, world-objective conditions, as well as the application of Hegel's logical categories within the structure and argument of *Capital*. Dunayevskaya continued this pursuit of reading *Capital* dialectically throughout her correspondence in early 1950.

The remainder of the Chapter will primarily focus on three documents which drew together Dunayevskaya's insights and the Tendency's philosophical work. The first document considered is Dunayevskaya's discussion notes of February 15, 1950. These represent "minutes" of a conversation between Boggs, James and Dunayevskaya. The second document is a pamphlet published by the Tendency in September 1950, entitled

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[1] Dunayevskaya does return to Lenin in her letter to James dated December 2, 1950 (Archive #9247). The intention of this letter was to again demonstrate the Tendency's historical link to Lenin.

State Capitalism and World Revolution.[2] The pamphlet was intended as an overview of the State Capitalist position for the purpose of defining the Tendency's place in the Socialist Workers Party. The third document consists of notes prepared by Dunayevskaya in December 1950 and January 1951 for a discussion among the Tendency's members. This document specifically addressed the role of planning within capitalism. Where appropriate, references will also be made to supporting letters which also circulated among the Tendency's membership over the 1950-1951. The key purpose, however, of this Chapter is to demonstrate Dunayevskaya's growing confidence in applying Hegelian frameworks and categories to Marx's "economic" work and to draw into clear relief the insights she derived from this application.

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[2] Dunayevskaya's relationship to this document is fraught in the historical sense as its authorship has most often been attributed to James. In July 1972 Dunayevskaya released a document entitled "For the Record: The Johnson-Forest Tendency, or theory of State-Capitalism, 1941-1951; its Vicissitudes and Ramifications, 1972" see: Raya Dunayevskaya, *1953 as "A New Divide Within Marxism"* (Chicago : News & Letters Publication, 1989). 1989 was a significant year for the reproduction of this (and other) document(s) as CLR James died May 30, 1989. The opening preface written presumably by the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters made clear the depth of division that attended the break-up of Johnson Forest (1955): "The tragedy of CLR James' life is that, as co-founder of the State Capitalist Tendency (known as the Johnson-Forest Tendency), he could get so far in the search for the new beginning which the post-World War II world demanded, and yet not succeeded in the philosophic breakthrough in which that new beginning had to be grounded. With his death on May 30, 1989, the rewriting of history, which he and his 'disciple' (as Paul Buhle called himself) practiced during his life, is sure to expand [Buhle had written a biography about CLR James that misrepresented the James/Dunayevskaya collaboration, according to News and Letters]. It makes important not only an objective critique of Buhle's latest biography of James… but a careful re-study of Raya Dunayevskaya's critiques over many years… " (Dunayevskaya, *1953as "A New Divide Within Marxism"*, n.p.).

Workers Revolt and the Dynamics of Capitalist Expansion

Dunayevskaya initiated her August 30, 1949 letter to CLR James with an apology for its disorganized state but she noted she felt it was better to "…write itself out than wait for a logical order to give it form."[3] However, what followed this caveat is not devoid of logical form at all. Dunayevskaya used this opportunity to trace Lenin's "discovery" of dialectics in a historically concrete manner. In doing so, she revealed her own surprise at making a philosophical connection between Lenin's major (pre-1914) contributions and what followed from his Hegel Notebooks. In previous letters, Dunayevskaya had already made the point that the "on the ground" organizational responses by the masses turned Lenin to philosophy. This letter now makes the connection from philosophy to Lenin's theoretical contributions post-1914. To make this connection, Dunayevskaya argued that there were three periods of transition in Lenin's development of dialectics:

> 1900 – in prison Lenin begins to read Hegel, Kant, French Naturalists
> 1902 – produces "What is to be Done"
> 1908 – rereads philosophical texts; produces "Materialism and Empiro-Criticism"
> 1914 – 1916 – philosophic notebooks; *Imperialism*, "April Theses" etc. .[4]

Considering each of these stages, Dunayevskaya offered an assessment of the relevance of the transition for the Tendency's work. It is in regard to the 1902 period that she noted her own surprise at having previously missed the philosophical connection to "What is to be Done?":

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[3] Archive #1702.
[4] Archive #1702.

> In 1900 he [Lenin] is in prison where he has finished "Dev. Of Cap. In Rus." [sic] and he begins to read Hegel, Kant and the "French Naturalists". The result is an organization plan which is consummated in 1902 in "What is to be Done" (This little fact ought to be worth something to us when we get down seriously in the dialectic of the party. Why did I never before note that he read philosophy – probably for the first time…just before he worked out the party?).[5]

Moreover, Dunayevskaya concluded that the greater her exposure to Lenin's historical development as a dialectic itself the more clearly she is able to understand and concretize other Marxist thinkers of this early period. Specifically, she singled out Plekhanov, Trotsky, and Luxemburg:

> …the deeper I get into the dialectics the softer I get to my "enemies": first it was Plekhanov who began to make sense, at least within historic context; then I began to appreciate Luxemburg's attempt to find a fundamental economic cause for imperialism. Well, now, finally I am even ready to forgive LT [Leon Trotsky] his permanent revolution. 1903 is such a damned important year! …Something was in the air. Lenin creates a category: the party. LT creates a category: the permanent revolution. And in 1905 the Russian proletariat bursts forth.[6]

Dunayevskaya concluded this particular discussion of these key post-Marx thinkers by arguing that the insights being developed theoretically fell short of the real movement of the workers – ignoring to a large extent the organizational responses of the masses in 1905.[7] Moreover, there was an implicit failure to connect the workers' revolt and its failure to the world-historic conditions that followed: "Once that [worker revolt in Russia] is defeated, the counter-revolution runs high not only in Tsarist Russia but on a world scale and it is there that the genuinely capitalistic law of motion, unhampered by revolts, reveals itself and heads directly for WWI."[8]

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[5] Archive #1702. Dunayevskaya is drawing on Krupskaya's *Reminiscences of Lenin* here. In this instance Dunayevskaya recorded the term "French naturalists"; however, other translations use the term materialists: "In the evenings Vladimir Ilyich usually read books on philosophy – Hegel, Kant or the French materialists – and when he grew very tired, Pushkin, Lermontov or Nekrasov." See: N. K. Krupskaya. "Reminiscences of Lenin." Web page, 1970 [accessed 7 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/krupskaya/works/rol/rol02.htm. "Materialism" and "naturalism" are often used interchangeably in various translations.

[6] Archive #1702.

At this point in the letter, Dunayevskaya broke her discussion on Lenin to insert what was, by her account, essentially an aside; however, its theoretical insight and importance makes it relevant for inclusion here. As already cited, Dunayevskaya argued that the workers' revolt and its subsequent failure "freed" capitalist expansion: "I will not stop here to show that the 'growing revolt' is what gave capitalism its movement (I believe it can easily be established in cooperation, manufacture and machinofacture, and I will try to be prepared for that discussion) but wish to limit myself to two things: (1)technology, (2)competition."[9] Before examining the two identified topics, though, it is important to understand how Dunayevskaya viewed capitalist expansion. The assertion that the workers' revolt set capitalist – that is, imperialist – expansion loose at first reads like a "blame the victim" statement. However, and quite to the contrary, what is apparent is the unfolding of a dialectic between workers revolt and capitalist expansion – that is, an interpenetration of opposites. While mass revolts on the face of it negate the extraction of surplus value *in situ* there is a subsequent response by capitalism, poignantly displayed in repressive state responses and the brutal practices of colonialism. More specifically, Dunayevskaya argued that this negation was displayed in less obvious ways through technological expansion/improvement (downgrading the reliance on the unruly workers) and increased global competition carried out via states in the interests of capital (imperialism). Yet, the failure on the part of Marxists to identify counter-movements and to think dialectically about historical processes fed into the failure to prepare for counter-revolution – a truth that Dunayevskaya saw as evident in Marxist theory leading up to the First World War and even more apparent in the concrete reality of the Stalinist counter-revolution. "Now the pre-1914 Marxists thought that this law of collapse would bring revolution automatically and from then on no one need worry about socialism," she wrote. In essence, the failure to think dialectically, to view history through the "double-movement" of the first negation and the "negation of negation" resulted in a kind of socialist subscription to an "end of history" thesis that made socialism inevitable and perfect.[10]

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[7] This particular insight was also likely further assisted by Krupskaya's writings. She recorded that Plekhanov, due to his exile, had lost touch with the workers. See N. K. Krupskaya. "Reminiscences of Lenin." Web page, 1970 [accessed 7 July 2006]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/krupskaya/works/rol/rol03.htm.

[8] Archive #1703.

[9] Archive #1703.

In her "aside", Dunayevskaya further developed her argument that the growing revolt of workers drove capitalist expansion. Having laid the ground for a further discussion of the relationship of the workers revolt to machinofacture, Dunayevskaya focused in more detail on technology and competition. It is in this discussion that Dunayevskaya demonstrated the power of dialectical analysis. She began with a challenge to the typical understanding of the relationship between competition and capitalism, that is, that competition is a natural driving force to capitalist expansion and, as such, provides an inherent rationale for technological innovation. Arguably, the place of competition has been firmly entrenched in political economy since the time of Adam Smith and his assertion that competition acted as an invisible hand in the market. Dunayevskaya, however, rejected the idea of competition as a "natural" human inclination or a "product" of market interaction, and instead argued that Marx insightfully inverted this relationship in two important ways. First, he argued that innovation/technological improvement were not "invented" until applied by workers in the factory. And, second, according to Dunayevskaya's reading, he asserted that innovations were introduced as mechanisms to control labour and diminish its ability to play a direct role in the processes of production.[11] As Dunayevskaya noted:

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[10] Archive #1703.

> Somewhere Marx says that technology sets the mode of production etc. etc., and this has often been repeated, but what has been forgotten is that that same paragraph that [sic] a true history of technology would show it was not great men who discovered, but great masses. ... Marx moreover points out that even after the discovery has been made (that I believe is in Vol. III) and "applied," it doesn't actually operate till after the workers in the factory have applied [it]. ... The second thing is: when is the invention introduced? Again, we have been bourgeois in our answer; we have said competition forces him [the capitalist] to [implement technology]; but Marx shows that this is only a reflection of growing revolt. A labour saving device is introduced to get rid of rebellious labour, to simplify operation so that women and children can be introduced into the factory... .[12]

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[11] Which, of course, ultimately leads to the falling rate of profit. The resulting crises, argued Marx, is the mechanism for capital to destroy its inefficiencies and "right" the process of accumulation. However, this argument is further developed in Dunayevskaya's 1950 correspondence in which she applied Hegel's categories to *Capital*.

[12] Archive #1703-1704, underlining in original. The theoretical richness of this letter could easily warrant a chapter. Following the discussion quoted above, Dunayevskaya asked who is the real enemy, given that competition is a reflection also of the mode of production and, perhaps more importantly, the relations of production which attend the mode. She answered this question with Lasalle: "Why? It is not only after the plunge into freedom that the positivist and not the reformist is the main enemy. The impatience

Recognizing that her argument had expanded beyond the scope of the letter, which was to examine the three periods of transition in Lenin's writings and theoretical development, Dunayevskaya returned her discussion to Lenin's movement from "official Marxism" to "true Marxism" in 1914. Dunayevskaya reconstructed Lenin's outline for *Imperialism* from his notebooks to demonstrate his use of Hegel's notion of the "unity of opposites":

> ...I do wish to bring out that in the outline of this, as all works following, is the unity of opposites and the fact that every single thing without exception can be transformed into its opposite, and only on the basis of a higher unity can struggle for socialism continue concretely [sic]. ...he [Lenin] writes: "This formula (the struggle for socialism [as posed by Pannekoek]) is incorrect. The struggle for socialism consists of the unity of the struggle for immediate interests of workers (in correspondence to reforms) and struggle, revolutionary, for power, for expropriation of bourgeoisie for overthrow of bourgeois gov't and bourgeoisie."
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> And, so Lenin had left even Lenin of 1914 behind when he wrote that socialization of labour "is bound to" lead to revolution.[13]

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of the calm-looking positivist to get 'immediately to the absolute' means forgetting these unskilled workers are playing around with Bismark. Lasalle saw the unions and their opportunism; he was such a 'revolutionist' and abhorred them so that he even invented the theory of the iron law of wages to show that they could not accomplish anything for the proletariat; while he set-off to capture the state to bring in socialism in hot-house Bismarkian fashion. Lordy, how we keep repeating the mistakes of the past: can't you see him [Lasalle] in Bukharin?" (Archive #1704). Such an analysis of the failure to "smash" the state and to focus on labourers also could be levelled against the welfare state which was in its early stages at the time of this letter (hence the Bismark reference) and the same error repeated in state capitalist Russia. Thus, we can conclude that any theory that fails to understand the dialectical relationship between state and capital is likely to repeat the same failures as Bismark, state capitalism, and welfare statism. Notably, these errors are realized in the ostensible pursuit of the goal of making conditions better for the working class.

[13] Archive #1706. This citation is from Lenin's *Notebooks on Imperialism* and is a response to Pannekoek's "State Expenditure and Imperialism". The quotation in Lenin's *Collected Works* reads as follows: "This formula is wrong. The *struggle for socialism* lies in the *unity* of the struggle for the immediate interests of the workers (including

Thus, Dunayevskaya closed her letter to James. The key elements that are derived from this bear some repeating here before we close the 1949 correspondence. Dunayevskaya was demonstrating the new insights one can obtain through a dialectical understanding of world-conditions. She had at this point in the correspondence effectively argued that Lenin's shift in understanding was the result of his philosophical studies which significantly altered his sense of revolutionary vanguardism ("the Party") leading to a more nuanced understanding of the transformation of opposites which leads to new unities.[14] For Lenin, argued Dunayevskaya, this forced a new understanding of imperialism (as a unified relationship between finance capital and the competition of states) and recognition that socialization of labour alone was not sufficient grounds for revolution.

As Dunayevskaya traced Lenin's philosophical development, we are also witness to her increasing application of Hegelian categories within the logical structure of *Capital*. Her discussion of competition and technology, though brief here, challenged "orthodox Marxist" treatments and ensured that agents, that is workers, continued to be

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reforms) and the **revolutionary** *struggle* for power, for expropriation of the bourgeoisie, for the overthrow of the bourgeois government and the bourgeoisie.

What has to be combined here are *not* the struggle reforms + phrases about socialism, the struggle 'for socialism', *but two forms* of struggle.

For example:

1. Voting for reforms + revolutionary action by the masses... .
2. Parliamentarism + demonstrations... .
3. The demand for reforms + the (concrete) demand for revolution... .

Economic struggle *together* with the unorganized, with the masses, and not only *on behalf* of the organized workers... .

4. Literature for the advanced + free, mass literature for the more backward, for the unorganized, for the 'lower masses'... .
5. Legal literature + illegal... ."

Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 39, pp. 270-271.

[14] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 38, p. 357.

the focus (and source) of structural change. For example, note that both the application of new technologies and competition derived from the "growing revolt" among workers. No new application of technology could be realized unless implemented by workers. Likewise, labour competition (among capitalists) itself was seen to be the product (at least in part) of the workers' revolt—and, importantly, the failure of workers to successfully implement social revolution, as in the case of Russia in 1905, had a global impact as capital seeks to find secure labour and capital resources outside of national borders.

The archives do not record further correspondence in regard to Dunayevskaya's August 1949 letter. In two subsequent letters (one addressed to James and the other to Boggs) Dunayevskaya appeared for the moment, at least, to let go of the "Lenin pursuit" in favour of expanding her Hegelian reading of *Capital*. On October 5, 1949, Dunayevskaya wrote to James with the purpose of applying dialectics to *Capital*. The "notes" as she referred to them, appear to be for the purpose of self-clarification, as she wrote: "What I try to do in these notes, then, is to point to the new 'discoveries' rather than argue about them."[15] In her covering letter, Dunayevskaya outlined the three new discoveries she believed were now apparent from a dialectical reading of Chapter I, Volume I of *Capital*. These are summarized below from Dunayevskaya's text:

> (1)The contrast between private and social in Chapter I is not between private property and social [sic], but between private or individual labour and social labour. What Marx is doing then is showing the alienation of the individual labourer, his subsumption under the form of production. Property has nothing to do with it. …

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[15] Archive #9224.

> (2)Exchange value now turns out to be the only form of value able to expressing [sic] the true nature of its content, abstract labour. Previously we counterposed Value to form, thus degrading essence itself to "essenceless being". The interpenetration of essence and form, their indissoluble connection is the only thing that can impel the movement of one into the other... . Here, again, then knowing that production relationship was the essence of the economic category gave it an outside evolution instead of an integral development out of the social form of production.
> (3)It is this social form of production, which, when contrasted by Marx to other forms of production, that brings out the mere show of independence... and hides the dependence of the labourer. ...what this new social form of production, with its value form, hides is that it is a form worthy of the content, the mastery of process of production over man [sic].[16]

It is worth highlighting that the second discovery, in particular, was not merely a clarification to the Tendency's previous theorizing with regard to the dual nature of labour under capitalism, but was a significant revision. Recall that in previous letters, James had identified Chapter I of Volume I as relating to Hegel's category "Being". Here, based on her reading of Lenin, Dunayevskaya is now arguing that Chapter I is the "germ" of Marx's entire analysis and contains all of Hegel's categories (this is Lenin's observation, as well).[17] As such, the commodity form is not merely "hiding" or obscuring its real content, but rather form allows essence to appear – in fact, as a marginal note by Dunayevskaya indicates at the outset of the Notes (and quoting Hegel)

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[16] Archive #9224, underlining in original.

[17] Dunayevskaya's covering letter, in addition to the three discoveries, offered a defense of her reading of Hegel "into" Marx. "A different type of explanation is needed for another thing I try to do in the notes, and that concerns the boldness (but not recklessness, I hope) with which I draw parallels that just as Dialectical Reason includes Understanding, so it is impossible to restrict the development of the commodity to the development of being. It is true that Engels said that the development from commodity to production paralleled the development from Being to Essence in the Logic, but outside of that relationship to production, the development of Commodity involves the whole of the Logic and since I have Lenin's approval for that generalization, I trust the particular 'application' has not been far amiss" (Archive #9225, underlining in original).

"Essence must appear".[18] Form and Essence, then, must interpenetrate, creating a new unity. In concrete terms, this unity appears to us in the form of labour (note, not property), but it is labour power or abstract labour that creates value, allowing for self-movement and the expansion of the mode of production. For Dunayevskaya, Hegel's Law of Appearance was "reborn" in Marx's "Law of Value". In order to make more sense of Dunayevskaya's argument, it is worth turning to the notes she prepared for James on Appearance and Form.

Notes on Appearance and Form

Dunayevskaya wrote these notes with the intention of introducing a more philosophically, that is, Hegelian, grounded reading of Chapter I, Volume I of *Capital*. She opened by again turning attention to Lenin's philosophical notebooks, in which he commented: "It is impossible to grasp completely Marx's CAPITAL, and especially its first chapter, if you have not studied through and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic."[19] While Lenin's implicit instruction to Marxists was clear, he was never afforded the opportunity to detail how a proper understanding of Hegel could illuminate Chapter I.[20] Dunayevskaya had noted throughout her correspondence on Lenin that the dialectic had a profound effect on his post-1914 theorizing. It is in these notes, however, that

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[18] Archive #9226. See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 479.
[19] Archive #9226. Lenin, "Philosophical Notebooks" in *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 180.
[20] Of course, Lenin's "On the Question of Dialectics" and the "Philosophical Notebooks" are part of this process of explaining Hegel's project and the role of dialectical thinking in Marx's works, but these are not sustained readings of Marx's works through a Hegelian lens.

Dunayevskaya took up Lenin's implicit challenge and began to apply the *Logic* to *Capital.*[21]

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[21] At the risk of presenting a vulgar reading of Hegel's categories, but for the purpose of aiding the reader through this section and those that follow, a summary and overview of Hegel's "three doctrines" is in order here. For those more comfortable in "their Hegel" please pass over this rather long note.

In order to "think about thinking", Hegel divides his logic into three categories: Being, Essence, and Notion. It is the specifics of each of these categories that Dunayevskaya is attempting to bring to her reading of *Capital*. Although we have already referenced Hegel's *Logic* in previous Chapters, he has always been mediated—either by James, Boggs or Lenin. However, at this point, Dunayevskaya is moving away from this "mediated" Hegel to a more focused reading of Hegel himself and then subsequently applied to Marx. Thus, it is imperative that the reader and Dunayevskaya share a common vocabulary so that Dunayevskaya's analysis may be critically evaluated. This is not, however, an attempt to weigh-in on the many debates surrounding interpretations of Hegel.

As Marcuse so clearly outlined in *Reason and Revolution*, Hegel's project was to create a new, total system of philosophy. For Hegel, the underlying foundation of philosophy is Reason. As Marcuse explained: "The core of Hegel's philosophy is a structure the concepts of which – freedom, subject, mind, notion—are derived from the idea of Reason. …Man has set out to organize reality according to the demands of his free rational thinking… . Man is a thinking being. His reason enables him to recognize his own potentialities and those of his world. He is thus not at the mercy of the facts that surround him, but is capable of subjecting them to a higher standard, that of reason" (Marcuse, pp. 5, 6). A.V. Miller (translator of *Science of Logic*) wisely notes that Hegel's system demands that we think differently: "It may safely be said that the main obstacle to a grasp of the *Logic* is the fact that we are unaccustomed to dialectical thinking and are loath to make the effort to rid ourselves of the prejudices and presuppositions on which our ordinary thinking rests. We have always to be on our guard that we do not allow ourselves to rely solely upon the understanding, the abstractive intellect, which holds its concepts rigidly apart in isolation and overlooks their essential connectedness" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, n.p.). In his own introduction to the first edition of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel identified his project as a challenge to Kantian philosophy and a contribution to the development of a method that celebrates speculative reason: "The exoteric teaching of the Kantian philosophy—that the understanding ought not to go beyond experience, else the cognitive faculty will become a theoretical reason which by itself generates nothing but fantasies of the brain—this was a justification from a philosophical quarter for the renunciation of speculative thought" (Hegel, *Science of Logic,* p. 28). Hegel goes on: "The understanding *determines* and holds the determinations fixed; reason is negative and *dialectical*, because it resolves the determinations of understanding into nothing; it is positive because it generates the universal and comprehends the particular therein. …I maintain that it is this selfconstruing method alone which enables philosophy to be an objective demonstrated science" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 28).

Before briefly discussing Hegel's categories, it is useful to reflect on Hegel's employment of the term logic and the role of dialectical thinking in his philosophy. In his Preface to the 2nd Edition of *Science of Logic*, Hegel provides this definition of logic: "... then logic must certainly be said to be the supernatural element which permeates every relationship of man to nature, his sensation, intuition, desire, need, instinct, and simply by so doing transforms it into something human, even though only formally human, into ideas and purposes" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 32). Ultimately, "... the loftier business of logic therefore is to clarify those categories [of thought] and in them raise mind to freedom and truth" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 37). Hegel's system pursues "truth" through a rediscovery of Aristotelian metaphysics which we can subsume under the general term dialectics. Again, turning to Marcuse: "It [dialectics] is the proper form of thought because it is the proper form of reality in which every being is the synthetic unity of antagonistic conditions. ... The dialectical pattern represents, and is thus 'the truth of', a world permeated by negativity, a world in which everything is something other than it *really* is, and in which opposition and contradiction constitute the laws of progress" (Marcuse, p. 49). The *Science of Logic*, in particular, draws together Hegel's previous works to create a critical "instrument" to free Reason, to realize truth: "Formal logic accepts the world-form as it is and gives some general rules for theoretical orientation to it. Dialectical logic, on the other hand, rejects any claim of sanctity for the given, and shatters the complacency of thus living under its rubric" (Marcuse, p. 131).

In order to realize in practice his commitment to speculative reason and dialectical thinking, Hegel organized his system into three doctrines. The first two he subsumes under objective logic: Being and Essence. The third he subsumes under subjective logic: the Notion. While *Science of Logic* begins with Being, there is no "starting place" *per se* in this philosophical system. In order for there to be Being (or even Nothing) there must first be a "universal" concept or notion. As the reader may recall in the previous Chapter, Boggs forcefully asserted that interpretations of Hegel must always keep in mind that the logical movement of concepts is driven by a Universal expressed in a particular, and realized in the individual. For Boggs, only revolution can produce a new universal. For Hegel, Marcuse tells us, it was the French Revolution that brought this historical movement into bold relief (Marcuse, p. 6).

Returning to the first doctrine, we begin with pure being, that is being without opposition or contradiction cannot truly exist as it would only be self-referential. In the "smaller logic", Hegel begins the Doctrine of Being with a brief, but useful description: "Being is the Concept only *in-itself*, its determinations [simply] *are*; in their distinction they are *others* vis-à-vis each other, and their further determination (the form of the dialectical) is a *passing-over into another*. This process of further determination is both a *setting-forth*, and thus an unfolding, of the Concept that is *in-itself*, and the same time *going-into-itself* of being, its own deepening into itself. The explication of the Concept in the sphere of Being becomes the totality of being, just as the immediacy of being, or the form of being as such, is sublated by it" (Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia of Logic*, §84, p.

135). Hegel begins with "pure being" in order to demonstrate a series of determinations which lead to a higher category of logic, that is Essence.

Essence is arrived at by the negation of determinate being, according to Hegel. This is the first negation. "Essence stands between *being* and *Notion*; it constitutes their mean, and its movement is the *transition* from being into the Notion. Essence is being-in-and-for-itself, but in the determination of being-in-itself; for the general determination of essence is to have proceeded from being, or to be the first *negation of being*. ... At first, essence *shines* or *shows within itself*, or is reflection; secondly, it *appears*; thirdly, it *manifests* itself" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 391). The dialectical relationship between being and essence-- both categories necessarily interpenetrate each other-- leads to what Hegel calls "essential being" or Existence: "Existence; it is a being that has come forth from negativity and inwardness" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 479).

One could be tempted to read "Essence as Existence" as the "resting place" of Reason. That is, the over-coming of being through contradiction seems to lead us to truth: "When something turns into its opposite, Hegel says, when it contradicts itself, it expresses its essence. When, as Marx says, the current idea and practice of justice and equality lead to injustice and inequality, when free exchange of equivalents produces exploitation on the one hand and accumulation of wealth on the other, such contradictions, too, are the essence of current social relations. The contradiction is the actual motor of the process" (Marcuse, p. 149). Yet, this is not the end of the process, essence itself must move through "ground", "appearance", and "actuality". When we reach "actuality" in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, we are not at the moment of the "real" but rather at the moment of the "possible" – that is, the point of transition from objective logic to subjective logic, what Hegel names Notion (Marcuse, pp. 153-155).

Notion is the realm of freedom, truth, Reason. It is subjective not in the sense of a single subjectivity or identity, but in terms of the realization of a universal principle. The passing from Essence to Notion, then, is the second negation, the negation of negation. "I will confine myself here to a remark which may help one to grasp the notions here developed and may make it easier to find one's bearings in them. The Notion, when it has developed into a *concrete existence* that is itself free, is none other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 583). Further, "...Notion shows it to be the unity of *being* and *essence*. ... [Notion] is the truth of the relationship of substance in which being and essence achieve the fulfillment of their self-subsistence and their determination through each other. ...in the Notion, being-in-and-for-itself has attained a true and adequate reality, for the positedness is itself being-in-and-for-itself" (*S/L*, p. 583).

Notion is the highest stage of Hegel's logic, which he develops in the same excruciating detail as the previous two Doctrines (most of which has been overlooked here for the sake of clarity); however, before departing Notion, a word must be said about the final chapter of *Science and Logic*, entitled "The Absolute Idea". The relevance and importance of this brief chapter to Hegel's overall philosophical system has been variously debated. Its relevance to our consideration is that this conclusion is cited by Dunayevskaya as the source of her "philosophical moment" in the Hegel Letters of 1953 (it should also be acknowledged that Dunayevskaya did not complete her notes on the

In a brief six pages, Dunayevskaya examined the value form of the commodity utilizing Hegel's distinction of Form and Essence. In her discussion, Dunayevskaya worked from the category of Essence, assuming that we have already passed out of Being. The commodity, which is the sole concern of Chapter I already "is" but Marx's project was to understand what endowed the commodity with its "value". The first observation, then, of the commodity was its commensurability, "Marx, however, no sooner begins his analysis of the two-fold nature of this particular form of appearance of a product of labour than the act of exchange, to realize the commensurability of various kinds of commodities, abstracts from all use-value."[22] Once exchange value and use value are separated, Marx argued that we can "see" that the commodity contained this duality due to the dual nature of labour itself. Importantly, Dunayevskaya argued that "[t]he reduction of various kinds of labour to abstract human labour is a movement from private, individual labour to its social form."[23] She further observed: "In revealing the indissolubility of the form of labour with the form of production, Marx shows that the

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Science of Logic until January 26, 1961 – long after the historical period being considered here. For a further discussion see: Dunayevskaya, Hudis, and Anderson, p. 49). While a more rigorous discussion and analysis will follow when we take-up these letters, it is valuable for the reader to be aware that Hegel closes the *Science of Logic* with what is arguably a resolution to the idealist-materialist debate, he begins with the bold statement: "The absolute Idea has shown itself to be the identity of the theoretical and practical Idea" (*Science of Logic*, p. 824). Here we meet the absolute unity of object and subject and rather than reaching the end, we are again at the beginning, realizing a higher level of cognition.

[22] Archive #9226, underlining in original. Bearing in mind that this is Dunayevskaya's first sustained attempt to work through Hegel via Marx, it is interesting to note that she begins with Form and Essence but skips over Hegel's previous category, Ground. One may assume, arguably, that labour is the "ground" for the commodity – that is, its content realized through capitalism as a social form of production.

[23] Archive #9227, underlining in original.

substance of value has but one distinguishing feature and that [is] it is human."[24] This explication of content, that is the essential place of labour embedded in commodities by virtue of the process of production, meant that Marx's analysis of *the* commodity could stand as the analysis of the whole of capitalistic production.

Dunayevskaya continued by noting that for Marx the commodity form, which on the face of it mystifies its content, also brought to light a new measurement of commensurability, that is, labour-time. The commodity now stands as both the receptacle of congealed labour and the bearer of equivalent value – which are derived from a human source and measured in time. Marx traced this relationship in Chapter I by using the example of linen and coats. His quest was to understand how each commodity could be exchanged for the other given such a variance in the manner of producing each item and the significant differences in use value. Although Marx identified the category of abstract labour, that is, labour-power, as the source of commensurability, he also argued that the resulting "chain of equivalents" would be endless and ultimately dysfunctional without the realization of a universal equivalent—hence the money form.

> Now the necessity concealed in the contingency is that the social form of production requires an exclusive and yet universal equivalent. This appears first in the general form of equivalent when a single commodity acts as equivalent. This general value-form is at the same time the "reduction of all kinds of actual labour to their common character of being human labour general [sic], of being the expenditure of human labour power.[25]

The realization of money as a universal equivalent further obscures the role of labour in both concrete and abstract forms. Dunayevskaya quoted Marx's analysis that the "highest and most stubborn error" of bourgeois political economy was vested in its theory of money—that is, the failure to recognize the money-form as the simple commodity form.[26] Marx wrote:

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[24] Archive #9227.
[25] Archive #9229, underlining in original.

> Everyone knows, if he knows nothing else, that commodities have a value form common to them all, and presenting a marked contrast with the varied bodily-forms of their use-values. I mean their money form. Here, however, a task is set us, the performance of which has never yet even been attempted by *bourgeois* economy, the task of tracing the genesis of this money form, of developing the expression of value implied in the value relation of commodities, from its simplest almost imperceptible outline to the dazzling money form.[27]

On the face of it, Dunayevskaya's employment of the Hegelian category, Essence, and its particular expression, Appearance, did not significantly alter her previously recorded analysis of the centrality of the law of value to understanding *Capital*. However, that is on the face of it. Upon closer inspection we see that this reading of *Capital*, that is of the commodity form and its related appearance, demonstrated the displacement of property relations as the primary focus of analysis. Rather, the primary focus was the resulting social relations among the means of production that were the outcome of value production that produced exchange-value through alienated, abstract labour. This was not an economic analysis, this was a philosophical argument drawn from the logical antagonisms present in the simple commodity. These are the same sets of social relations and antagonisms that undergirds capitalism as a whole.

The presence of a universal equivalent form (money) also moved Dunayevskaya to note the manner in which capitalism perverted the very notion of freedom. It is under the capitalist mode of production that the alienation of the worker from her product is viewed as "being free". As value is attached to the produced commodity rather than the estranged labour that produced it, the economist's attention was diverted:

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[26] Archive #9229.
[27] Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), p. 55, emphasis in original.

> An integral part of this self-estrangement is the notion of abstract freedom. So overwhelming a force is show of the existent that even classical political economy has made the epochal discovery that labour is the source of value are victims of the fetishism of commodities and hence could not dispel the "objective show of the social character of labour", and continued to consider value as an attribute of the commodity. ...Hence it continued to see freedom where reduction of all kinds of labour to uniform, simple, average labour under which the individual private labour was completely subsumed. ...The equality of labours of different individuals achieved through alienation of their private persons could have been mistaken for freedom only by him who had so abstract a conception of it, see [sic] that he himself was the victim of a process of production that had the master over men, and thus missed all the links that the form of value had to the form of social production.[28]

Dunayevskaya ended her notes with a revolutionary tone by citing Marx's conclusion that the value form could be cast-off by "...production by freely associated men":

> Until then the specifica differentia of the value-form remains a secret even to Ricardo, just as much as the equivalent form remained a secret to Aristotle who lived in Greek society founded upon slavery. How could it be otherwise when the most unnatural and fantastic form of all the commodity form of labour, labour power, is accepted by this society as a matter of course?[29]

Rendering a judgment on this essay is difficult. As Dunayevskaya herself noted in her covering letter to James, she was not attempting to construct an argument, but to outline what she believed to be "new discoveries" garnered by reading Marx via Hegel. Overall, the three discoveries she cited, and utilizing Hegel's Law of Appearance as Law of Value, stand as less theoretically remarkable than they are politically remarkable. This statement requires further elaboration. From a theoretical perspective, relating the essence of commodity to its form – Dunayevskaya's emphasis on Hegel's insight that "essence must appear"—did emphasize dialectical thinking in the analysis of the mode of production while keeping human beings at the centre of her understanding of productive relationships. However, Dunayevskaya's (and the Tendency's) works had already successfully reached similar conclusions – conclusions that inspired the further delving into Hegel in the first place.[30] Dunayevskaya implicitly recognized this in her covering letter on the "discovery" that labour not property is key – while still defending her insights as discoveries born anew – as she wrote "You might say that we always knew that. But we didn't; it is impossible to 'to know before you know' and until we know the contradiction between private and social labour, pointing to the production relation vs. property form meant violence to the actual dialectical development."[31] In her subsequent letter to Boggs on October 12, 1949, this point was further stressed:

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[28] Archive #9230, underlining in original.
[29] Archive #9231, underlining in original.

> ...I wish to miss none of the transitions [in *Theories of Surplus Value*], which is one reason for my notes on Chapter I being so cumbersome—I was feeling my way by a restatement of the fundamental points in terms of the determinations of essence and of form, and linking the one to the other as tightly as the particular is linked to the universal in the realm of notion. ...Naturally, all of our notes are just notes and there will be a fuller development as we go along.[32]

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[30] Recall in Chapter Two the discussion of Trotsky's error deriving from his focus on statified property while failing to understand that laobur's "value" drove the workers' state.

[31] Archive #9224.

[32] Archive #9232.

Given that Dunayevskaya herself treated this re-reading of *Capital* as only being in its preliminary stages, what is outstanding is that these notes mark the beginning of a political shift, or perhaps better stated, a "coming together" of Dunayevskaya's theoretical understanding combined with her political (and organizational) practices. She closed her letter to Boggs almost prophetically: "I note with great jealousy that Marx never allowed himself to be involved in an abstract debate, and insisted on the concrete, beginning with the concrete commodity, the concrete revolution."[33] Dunayevskaya's later insistence on linking theory with objective world conditions, such as the miners' strikes or the death of Stalin, deepened the schism among the Tendency's leadership until its final dissolution in 1955. However, we are getting ahead of ourselves; nonetheless, these notes stand as a political marker of a transition in Dunayevskaya's practice and theoretical orientation.

Returning to the project of re-reading *Capital*, Dunayevskaya forwarded two additional letters to James in January 1950. These letters, in conjunction with the notes, were designed (at least in part) as preparatory materials for discussion among the Tendency. Minutes of the discussion held February 15, 1950 between James, Boggs, Dunayevskaya and a worker will be taken up in the next section.[34]

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[33] Archive #9233. Dunayevskaya further noted in this letter that she was reading Luxemburg at the same time and that Luxemburg is "in a mess" because she begins abstractly. This reference gives us a sense of the breadth of study Dunayevskaya was engaged in at any specific moment.

[34] The late 1949 early 1950 period was clearly of great significance to Dunayevskaya. In her essay on the Coal Miners' strike, she specifically highlights this meeting. For her, one of the more important decisions she advocated among the Tendency was that a worker should be present for theoretical discussions (as these were intended to complete a book manuscript). In a sense, the process being followed was much like "workshoping a play" and it was one that Dunayevskaya continued to follow throughout her life time.

The January Interlude and Tendency Work

Dunayevskaya identified the work *Capital* as an "interlude" to the Tendency's other work. However, by the end of January it was clear that her engagement with the "interlude project" was intellectually stimulating: "The 'interlude' I spoke of in my last letter is becoming an independent stage, and moreover, has me so enthusiastic… ."[35] The previous letter had mapped Marx's historical progression and the alterations he made to his outline for *Capital.* Dunayevskaya approached the historical and philosophical development of Marx with the same intensity she demonstrated with Lenin's works. As she recorded in this letter, Marx's philosophical development began with his 1844 manuscripts in which "…his very first impulse to understand 'the material interests' of his day took shape."[36] Dunayevskaya proceeded to note by 1847, Marx's major works demonstrated a systematic presentation of economic theory.[37] The next "moment" that Dunayevskaya argued was of particular importance was Marx's work between 1859-1878:

> It [Marx's development] in January 14, 1859, with his letter to Engels in which he announces "I have thrown over the whole doctrine of profit as it has existed up to now. In the method of treatment that by mere accident I have again glanced through

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The reader will also become aware that the correspondence referenced from this point forward will have been initiated by Dunayevskaya. These are the only letters preserved in her archives, although, the content often makes clear that other notes or letters have been circulated by other Tendency members. This being said, it is safe to note that James' interaction does dissipate and there is a definite cooling of the relationship among the Tendency's co-founders.

[35] Archive #1730.

[36] Archive #1724.

[37] The major works noted here by Dunayevskaya include: *The German Ideology* (1845), *The Povery of Philosophy* (1847), *Wage Labour and Capital* (1847), and *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848).

> Hegel's Logic has been of great service to me... ." He then conceives the bourgeois economy to be presented in 6 books ...[38]

This, according to Dunayevskaya, was the first complete outline of *Capital*. She recounted the structure as summarized below:

> I. Capital
> II. Landed Property
> III. Wage Labour
> IV. State
> V. International Trade
> VI. World Market[39]

Dunayevskaya also noted that the content we generally associate with *Theories of Surplus Value* was originally intended to be appended to the appropriate chapter in each volume. Dunayevskaya argued that the movement of these theories to a new volume was a significant alteration that signaled a change in how Marx was approaching his study of capitalism:

> BUT THIS STRUCTURE WILL BE CHANGED, not merely in order to put all theories "at the end" in a separate book, but for the more important and actual reason that nothing will interfere either with the dialectical development of Marx's own theory nor with the actual development of capitalist production for whatever history will be included within the body of the work itself, will be not [sic] the history of theory but the history of productive relations arising out of the technological development and resulting in the struggle of workers for a shortening of the working day.[40]

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[38] Archive #1724.

[39] Archive #1724.

[40] Archive #1725. See also: Enrique Dussel, and Fred Moseley, *Towards an Unknown Marx: a Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-63* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Although beyond the scope of our discussion here, Dussel has advanced an argument that would challenge Dunayevskaya's reading of *Capital*; yet, both authors arguably stand outside of the common orthodoxy concerning Marx. In his introduction to Dussel's work, Fred Mosely notes: "Dussel (1997) argues that Marx's emphasis on living labour as the 'creative source' of surplus value is based on Schellings' critique of Hegel. According to Hegel, Being passes into Essence as a result of its own self-development.

Dunayevskaya further noted that between 1863-1865 Marx drafted all parts of *Capital*; however, Marx presented the revised structure in 1866. Now we see the familiar form:

.Book I: the Production Process of Capital
Book II: the Circulation Process of Capital
Book III: Form of the Process as a Whole
Book IV: Contribution to the History of Economic Theory[41]

Dunayevskaya argued that Marx was fully aware of the critical depth of his work. Of Vol. I, he wrote:

> The best points of my book are: (1)the double character of labour, according to whether it is expressed in use value or exchange value (all understanding of the facts depends on this, it is emphasized immediately in the first chapter); (2)the treatment of surplus value independently of its particular forms as profit, interest, ground, rent, etc. This will come out especially in the second volume. The treatment of particular forms by classical economy, which always mixes them up with the general form, is a regular hash. (8/24/67)[42]

She further elaborated in the letter that Marx's first point on the duality of labour had been present throughout his earliest works; however, the second comment demonstrated

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According to Schelling, on the other hand, the 'creative source' of Being exists outside of and prior to Being. Being is explained as an effect of this 'creative source'. Similarly, Dussel argues that for Marx living labour is the economic 'creative source', which also exists outside of and prior to capital. Capital cannot produce surplus value as a result of its own 'self-development'. This is Marx's inversion of Hegel's logic, according to Dussel" (Dussel, p. xvii). Arguably, Dussel's reading overlooks the dialectical logic of transitions from being and essence and notion; however, the recognition of living labour as the object and subject of the capitalist mode of production is shared with Dunayevskaya. Moreover, Dussel's work does speak to the continuing relevance of developing a philosophically grounded reading of Marx's key contributions to Political Economy.

Before closing this note, it is interesting to further note that Dussel also singles out the change in placement and focus of *Theories of Surplus Value*. Dussel's argument, reminiscent of Dunayevskaya, is that Marx's "critical confrontation" with these theories forced the development of new categories and significantly pushed Marx beyond the discussion and categories of the *Grudrisse* (Dussel, p. xix).

[41] Archive #1727.

[42] Archive #1728.

Marx's application of dialectical logic so that with *Capital* the particular forms were "... compressed to its essentials: Capital and its opposite, wage labour."[43] Thus, Dunayevskaya consolidated the argument she had been making for nearly a decade that value was the core of Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production: "The revolution in the plan of Capital was not as a result of the absolute conclusion – the antagonism between labour and capital which was the very basis of every word he ever wrote from 1843 on—but that the conclusion arose not out of history alone but of the very dialectical development of production of value and which, both in its surplus value and wage forms finds embodiment in the social product."[44]

Dunayevskaya followed her January 24, 1950 letter with a brief one page note on January 30, 1950 addressed to James. Here she again highlighted her desire to expend more effort in working out the dialectic of *Capital.* She argued that there were three pivotal stages to Marx's work that required further study. In the first phase, she argued Marx shelved his first outline of the *Critique* to take on German philosophy and science. The second stage was the writing of the *Critique* but this treatment lacks, in particular, the money-form; nor did Marx "see", she argued, the contradictions contained in the commodity. The "remarkable" third phase she recorded was the Marx who was working out his section on machinery which led to the revolutionary place of workers' revolt in his analysis:

> ... the Marx of 1867 of Capital is the Marx of the First International who not merely proclaims to the whole world the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation, but in proclaiming it he has so developed the accumulation of capital: accumulation of misery

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[43] Archive #1728, underlining in original.
[44] Archive #1728, underlining in original.

> that we see the precise "mechanism" of the how of the overthrow of capitalist conditions: the workers revolt; the "mechanism" then is the subject.[45]

The content of these two letters was revisited in the face-to-face meeting between Boggs, James, and Dunayevskaya on February 15, 1950. Retracing these historical steps through Dunayevskaya's correspondence leads to the sense that the Tendency was reaching a point of breakthrough. Arguably, though, the breakthrough will be Dunayevskaya's alone. Perhaps, this is why one gets the sense that she is driving the Tendency's work and analysis more so than in its earlier work. References, for example, to preparing a manuscript for Marcuse have all but dropped from discussion at this point and James' few comments communicate a sense of growing disinterest.[46] Admittedly, James' ability to fully interact with the Tendency will be curtailed due to his internment on Ellis Island in 1952 and his subsequent deportation from the United States in 1953.

The findings of Dunayevskaya's study of Marx's development dominated the discussion (as recorded by Boggs). For the most part, Dunayevskaya's presentation further elaborated her previous observations; however, she does begin her discussion with an interesting connection to the American proletariat – likely recalling her own statement that Marx never entered into an abstract debate—in regard to the miners' strikes: "…so at present the struggle of miners and [the] new content they have infused into 'No contract, no work' is what gave me the impulse to go into essential dialectical development of Marx himself. Dialectically, the problem of form, is the problem of contract today."[47] This "vantage point", as she named it, imparted the need for the Tendency to ensure that its theory was linked to and drawn from the proletariat response to objective world conditions. She recalled from their Lenin studies that the experiences of spontaneous Soviet formation and World War I were driving forces which deepened Lenin's theoretical studies and philosophical development in a significant way post-1914. She further claimed that such an argument, or vantage point, could also be applied to Marx's development via the 1848 Revolution and his fascination with the Paris Commune of 1871.[48] Specifically, Dunayevskaya argued that the period between 1861-1873 marked an engagement with world conditions (such as the US civil war, unrest and revolution in France, mass strike movements across Europe), economic theory (Marx finished with Ricardo, critiqued Lasalle and Bismark—whom Dunayevskaya named state capitalists), and fundamentally reworked *Capital* (including the important discovery of the organic composition of capital). Dunayevskaya recounted that by 1866 Marx had finalized the structure of *Capital*:

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[45] Archive #1730.

[46] Of course, one can only speculate here. Boggs' biography would suggest also that James found Dunayevskaya's theoretical direction and approach to be somewhat unpalatable. The archives do, however, preserve some hand-written notes by James that appear very favourable and complimentary in his assessment of Dunayevskaya's work. For further reference see: Archive #8932-8960.

> 1866 – are the famous letters to Engels and Kautsky where instead of 6 books… we have 3 volumes…
> Process of Production
> Process of Circulation
> Forms of Process taken as a whole

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[47] Archive #1585. Dunayevskaya had been very involved with the miners' strikes and will continue to ground much of her theory in these concrete experiences. See: Raya Dunayevskaya, and Andy Phillips, *A 1980's View: the Coal Miners' Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist Humanism in the U.S.* (Chicago: News & Letters Publication, 1984).

[48] Archive #1586.

> (Engels had on his own eliminated the word Forms from the title of Vol. III when he published it).[49]

Finally, Dunayevskaya noted that Marx further revised his section on Form of Value after publication of the 1st edition of *Capital*, which included a completion of the section on the fetishism of commodities:

> Form, finally emerges as:
>
> formally free but actually enslaved
>
> formally individual labour, but actually socialized (By this time they are made into cooperators, their labour power no longer belongs to them)
>
> form of value equals fetishism of commodities
>
> violence of Ricardo's abstractions arises from the violence of capitalistic socialization of labour
>
> Political economy had reduced everything to value. Law of value, as the present contract, is the fixed form of the production relationship.
>
> Only FREELY associated labour can strip off this mystical veil. Form of value—new universal by which mastery of machine over man is established.[50]

This recount, provided by Dunayevskaya, still begged the question of the significance of the Paris Commune. Dunayevskaya answered that the Commune demonstrated a possible alternative form. The Commune for Marx was the proletarian response that Dunayevskaya indicated was necessary to move his theory and history forward. According to the minutes, the remainder of the meeting was filled with James' general conclusions and directions for the completion of the book manuscript. He does, however, make one interesting observation drawn from Dunayevskaya's work on Marx's transitions, that flies in the face of the orthodox interpretations of Marx's various works--that is, that the "real" revolutionary Marx is the Marx of *Capital*: "Marcuse... believes that in earlier writings, in earlier years Marx was more revolutionary and that in later years became sobered up. In reality the opposite is true."[51]

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[49] Archive #1591, underlining in original.
[50] Archive #1591-1592.

The Objective World Conditions of Johnson Forest

Between February and December 1950, Dunayevskaya continued her correspondence with James in regard to dialectically "unfolding" *Capital*. From her first presentation on her findings (February 1950) to her more complete "presentation" in December 1950-January 1951, she further refined her analysis of *Capital*. However, one would be remiss if the impression were created that this task absorbed all of Dunayevskaya's intellectual and organizational efforts. As previously mentioned, Dunayevskaya was over this same period deeply involved with the Miners' Strikes. Between 1949-1950, Dunayevskaya contributed articles to *The Militant* about the strikes. Although one could argue that these articles were largely "journalistic", one stands out for mention here as it demonstrates Dunayevskaya's ability to relate her philosophical and theoretical insights to actual practice and for these "practices" to further influence her theoretical and philosophical understandings.

Women as Revolutionary Subjects

As we have previously discussed, Dunayevskaya identified a number of "subjectivities" as being potentially revolutionary. Women constituted one of these "subjectivities" and Dunayevskaya specifically singled-out the role of miners' wives in realizing a workers' victory (even if temporary) in the West Virginia miners' struggle.[52] In the article, Dunayevskaya noted that much of the success of the strike action was attributable to the miners' wives. Moreover, she began the article by highlighting that this role had been overlooked: "This [the role of the wives] is one of the many facets of the successful mine struggle that the local press dealt with sketchily and the national capitalist press not at all."[53] She further noted a few "incidents" in which the wives active participation in the strike was decisive. The first incident was the action of 50 women to establish a picket line to prevent "scabs" from entering the Pursglove Coal Co. mine.[54] She further recounted that in Charleston, West Virginia, women joined the picket line: "The snobbery of the owner's son particularly aroused their anger. The women pickets stripped his shirt and jabbed hat pins into his shoulders."[55] Finally,

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[51] Archive #1594.

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[52] Notably, gender is often an overlooked element in studies of coal communities. In his New Zealand study (1880-1960), Len Richardson notes: "…many miners came with families. We know little about the role of wives and mothers played in mining communities, but there is enough evidence to suggest that the stereo-type of the conservatizing influence of wife and home needs revision" (Len Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community: the United Mineworkers of New Zealand, 1880-1960* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), p. 3; see also: Elizabeth Jameson, "Of Cabbages and Queens: Gender in the Hardrock "American West" in J. E. Fell, P. D. Nicolaou, and G. D. Xydous, eds., *5th International Mining History Congress Book of Proceedings* (Milos: Milos Conference Centre, 2000). I should also note that Dunayevskaya herself singled out this piece by including it in her collection of essays on women: *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future* (1985). One other unpublished, draft essay written in 1953 is also included in the collection. It begins an exploration of the intersection between gender and workplace, and gender and race.

[53] Archive #1478.

[54] Archive #1478.

[55] Archive #1478. As an aside, the "hat pin" seems to have been a "workers' weapon". In another article written November 10, 1950 about the nation-wide communications workers strike, Dunayevskaya reported: "The girls 'with a smile in their voices' [telephone operators] showed their voices to be even more effective to keep scabs from crossing the line. In addition to their lusty lung power, the girls were armed with hat pins—or so the scabs complained" (Archive #1481).

Dunayevskaya reported that the women actively organized relief efforts and worked with other labour organizations to coordinate the receipt of donations. While it would have been sufficient for Dunayevskaya's acknowledgement of the women's efforts to end here, she went further in her analysis: "Precisely because the role of the women was an active one it was inevitable that is should lead to organization."[56] In particular, the formation of a Women's Auxiliary in Beckley, West Virginia stood out to Dunayevskaya, as these women did not simply articulate a blind support for "the men" but rather voiced a strong and clear political position on the labour dispute. Dunayevskaya quoted the Treasurer of the Auxiliary responding to the question: what would the women do if the men returned to work without a contract? " 'Then,' she [the Treasurer] answered quickly, 'they'd have to do the housework, too. They will have to build fires, cook their own food, wash their own clothes, clean the house and hire babysitters to take care of the children while they are in the mines.' "[57] Overall, Dunayevskaya's attention to the role of women in the strike action was demonstrative of the "places" she looked to find revolutionary potential. Tellingly, activity was linked to an organizational form that further empowered the women. She concluded her article with the statement: "These actions on the part of the women will be sure to leave their mark on the community as a whole."[58] And, we may hasten to add, a mark upon Dunayevskaya as well.

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[56] Archive #1478.
[57] Archive #1478.
[58] Archive #1478.

The Socialist Workers Party

Just as the objective world-conditions of the strikes inspired Dunayevskaya and reinforced her own sense of praxis, the organizational context of the Tendency was also significant. As already recounted in a previous Chapter, the Tendency had left the Workers Party in 1947 to take up membership in the Socialist Workers Party. We have also previously discussed the interim documents developed by the Tendency, particularly "The Invading Socialist Society" and the "Balance Sheet" on Trotskyism, before they entered the Socialist Workers Party. In 1950, Johnson Forest submitted a document to the Socialist Workers Party entitled *State Capitalism and World Revolution* which was published in the Party's *Discussion Bulletin*, September 1950. The intention of this document was to clarify the state capitalist position in the context of international Trotskyism and to advance an argument in favour of adopting state capitalist theory as the Party's "lens" for viewing objective world conditions.[59]

In many ways, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* is one of the most complete statements of what the Tendency stood for and its own self-appraisal of its place within International Trotskyism. Significantly, the document began by arguing that state capitalist theory was more than an answer to the "Russian Question". In a very real sense, the full maturity and sophistication of the Tendency's work came to bear in this document. As the document announced: "We base our analysis on the theory of state-capitalism. It is commonly believed that this has mainly to do with defeatism or defensism of Russia. That is the least of our concerns. ... We are primarily concerned here with what the refusal to accept this theory does to the party, its solidarity, its capacity to fight its enemies, its capacity to preserve itself and to grow, in brief, to prepare for the liquidation of Stalinism."[60] From the point of view of theoretical foundations, the Tendency was crystal clear in its assessment of Trotsky: "Our position is that the chaos in the International is due to the fact that Trotsky's method of analysis and system of ideas are wrong, and that the chaos in the International will continue to grow until a new system is substituted for the present one."[61] Structurally, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was divided into 11 sections over 79 pages and covered the key themes so often taken up by the Tendency: the relationship of planning to capitalism; Stalinist revisions to Marxist theory; Lenin on monopoly capitalism; the role of the Party; and the failures of Trotskyist method. Importantly, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* clearly articulated what the Tendency viewed as Lenin's "mastery of dialectics" and drew on their research into Lenin's philosophical development. Using Lenin's "conviction that socialism could be created only by an emancipated proletariat," the Tendency also utilized *State Capitalism and World Revolution* to challenge the Fourth International's support for Yugoslavia.[62] Given previous discussions highlighting Lenin's support for national self-determination, the opposition to Yugoslavia may seem to be at odds with the Tendency's advocacy of the right to self-determination. However, the opposite is true, the rejection of support for Tito was consistent with state capitalist analysis:

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[59] *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was a Tendency document and as such was written collaboratively and was not intended to be seen as the work of any one member of the group. In 1972, in responding to inquiries about the Tendency, Dunayevskaya noted: "James had twice reproduced this document. ...once... to which was attached a group of names that had absolutely noting to do with its writing... and the second time... under his own name..." (Dunayevskaya, *1953 as a New Divide within Marxism*, p. 3). Dunayevskaya goes on to wonder why James would continue to reproduce this document when, in her appraisal SCWR "...is old hat not only in the sense that it was written in 1950, but in the more fundamental sense that it was argued within a Trotskyist framework, since the Tendency was then still part of the Socialist Workers Party" (Dunayevskaya, *1953 as a New Divide within Marxism*, p. 4, underlining in original).

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[60] Archive #1338.
[61] Archive #1335.
[62] Archive #1378.

> "Johnson-Forest" took the position that the proletariat and the party should enter the national liberation movement and struggle for proletariat power under the general slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe. Thus, right from the beginning, we posed the struggle inside the Yugoslav movement against the national policy of Titoism… . Titoism is pure, conscious, consistent Stalinism. Having a model in both the theory and practice of Russia already established, Titoism has been able to achieve in a few short years the counter-revolutionary climax which it took Stalin nearly two decades to accomplish. Stalin had to struggle against the traditions and remnants not of capitalism, but of Leninism. Tito began as a finished Stalinist.[63]

The failure of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International to adopt state capitalist theory, argued Johnson Forest, led to the renewed support for yet another state capitalist state at the expense of workers and the general population. While *State Capitalism and World Revolution* went to great lengths to document the Tendency's case against support for Tito, the more significant theoretical issue that arises from this essay was the discussion of the fetish of state property that appeared so well-entrenched in international Trotskyism. Johnson Forest, and Dunayevskaya, never lost sight of how the international movement specifically and Marxism generally failed to grasp the role and significance of human labour. The errors that resulted from this mistake simply "pile up", culminating in what amounted to an anti-proletarian politics carried out by the International in the name of the workers. *State Capitalism and World Revolution* went into further detail on the history of the Fourth and Yugoslavia to clarify the Tendency's position; however, the most important contribution of the document arguably is found in the final section, "Philosophy in the Epoch of State-Capitalism". This section solidified the Tendency's theoretical foundations and elevated the question of state capitalism from consideration of a specific state (in this case, Yugoslavia) to an overall assessment of the current "epoch" of capitalist social production.

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[63] Archive #1379-1380, underlining in original.

This section of *State Capitalism and World Revolution* opened by noting:

> When we reach state-capitalism, one-party state, and war, hydrogen bomb, it is obvious that we have reached ultimates. ... All previous distinctions, politics and economics, war and peace, agitation and proganda, party and mass, the individual and society, national, civil and imperialist war, single country and one world, immediate needs and ultimate solutions—all these it is impossible to keep separate any longer. Total planning is inseparable from permanent crisis, the world struggle for the minds of men from the world tendency to the complete mechanization of men. ... State-capitalism is in itself the total contradiction, absolute antagonism.[64]

The age of ultimates, according to the Tendency, was the moment in which to realize revolution on a world scale.[65] The Tendency proceeded to introduce Hegel's critique of rationalism at this point in their argument in order to assert that philosophical foundations (for Hegel, Marx, Lenin, the Tendency) were of material consequence and, correspondingly, material circumstances were of philosophical consequence. Hegel's critique then furnished the basis for a dialectical engagement with the epoch the Tendency was naming state capitalist. It is useful to quote at some length from this section of the essay as the Tendency had very clearly adumbrated Hegel's critique:

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[64] Archive #1399.

[65] While it is certainly the case that *State Capitalism and World Revolution* is an exhaustive statement of the Tendency's theoretical and philosophical studies to date, it should not be read to correspond directly to Hegel's Absolute. The Tendency's work had not engaged Hegel's Absolute in a meaningful way at this point. Dunayevskaya will make this philosophical leap alone in May 1953.

> In brief, Hegel's critique of rationalism asserts:
>
> a. Contradiction, not harmonious increase and decrease, is the creative and moving principle of history. Society cannot development unless it has to overcome contradiction.
>
> b. All development takes place as a result of self-movement, not organization or direction by external forces.
>
> c. Self-movement springs from and is the overcoming of antagonisms within an organism, not the struggle against external foes.
>
> d. It is not the world of nature that confronts man as an alien power to be overcome. It is the alien power that he has himself created.
>
> e. The end towards which mankind is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms is not the enjoyment, ownership or use of goods, but self-realization, creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development of humanity. Freedom is creative universality, not utility. Between 1914 and 1917 Lenin, for the first time, mastered this.[66]

The critique of rationalism solidified the role of contradiction as the source of the Hegelian dialectic and that his critique was utilized by Marx to overcome both Idealism and vulgar materialism to realize "… the dialectic of Hegel could be retained and expanded only by the concept of the creative activity of the masses. On this basis the dialectic became in Marx's hands a revolutionary theoretical weapon against bureaucracy in all its forms, but primarily and particularly in the process of production."[67] Moreover, Hegel's dialectic was linked to Lenin's key works leading up to the 1917 Revolution. These are both strong statements given the historical period in which they were written – not to mention the context of a Trotskyist audience. Such an analysis, then, begged the question: in philosophical terms where did Stalin's philosophy differ? The answer was clear to Johnson Forest:

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[66] Archive #1402. It should be noted that a political point is likely also being made here. The document asserted the error of Trotsky and turned to Lenin as the final authority. Not a commonly held position among the Fourth International.
[67] Archive #1403.

> Stalinism, the ideology of state-capitalism, is the re-instatement of uncritical materialism and uncritical idealism. The materialism is in the accumulation theory: the kernel of all Stalinist-Titoist philosophy is that the worker must work harder than he ever did before. The idealism is in the theory of the party: the leaders, the elite, must lead as they never did before.[68]

The effect of Stalinist, rationalist philosophy, argued the Tendency, was evident in the counter-revolution in Russia but also in the global centralization of capital (beyond even what Lenin envisioned in *Imperialism*). Yet, the "way out" remained crystal clear if one embraced the Hegelian dialectic via Marx: "We have to draw a new universal, more concrete and embracing more creative freedom of the masses than even State and Revolution."[69]

State Capitalism and World Revolution clearly articulated the Tendency's appraisal of the Fourth International, its theoretical and philosophical orientations, and its advocacy for realizing revolutionary change that grew from the creativity of the masses rather than through a "party to lead". The essay, not surprisingly, did elicit a formal response from the Socialist Workers Party majority. Further, in a letter dated October 30, 1950, Dunayevskaya recounted to James her debate with a "Wrightite" over support for Tito at a Socialist Workers Party chapter meeting.[70] Dunayevskaya's report to James intimated that many of the rank and file workers at the meeting were drawn to the ideas she was presenting—raising the spectre (though entirely unspoken) that the fear among the Socialist Workers Party leadership was not only about losing the "political line" but of losing control of the Party itself. It is clear from the *State Capitalism and World Revolution* document and recounts of the members of the Tendency's participation in the Miners' strikes and at various chapter meetings that membership in the Socialist Workers Party was becoming increasingly untenable. The final break will be taken up in the next Chapter.

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[68] Archive #1404.

[69] Archive #1412.

[70] Within the Socialist Workers Party, opposition to the Johnson Forest tendency seems to have been headed by William F. Warde (George Novack) and John G. Wright (Joseph Vanzler). Warde and Wright undertook a formal written response to *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, to which Dunayevskaya was convinced (by James) to write a response, which she did June 5, 1951. These documents will be addressed in the next

The "Tremendous Leap"

Following the completion and publication of *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, Dunayevskaya continued her work on preparatory notes for the book manuscript long discussed by the Tendency. Between June 7 and December 2, 1950, only three substantial letters related to her theoretical work are retained in the archives. What is of significant import for our purposes, though, is that Dunayevskaya collected her thoughts for an oral presentation to the Tendency members December 27, 1950 and January 14, 1951. This presentation provides an excellent summary of her work to date and points to the new theoretical directions and analysis that were emerging from her studies.[71] It is here that we are able to clearly see the centrality of value in Marx's

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Chapter in the interest of preserving the chronological order of the Tendency's decision to leave the Socialist Workers Party in 1951.

[71] I cannot resist including here Dunayevskaya's commentary on Engels written to James on May 5, 1950. In her future writings, Dunayevskaya will articulate a very serious critique of Engels, but this letter demonstrates the power and moment of discovery—not to mention her further softening on Luxemburg. She wrote: "However, dear Brother [James], if you want to convince me on any point, don't quote Engels to me. He has

analysis and the political, theoretical, and philosophical implications that result from its centrality.

Dunayevskaya's topic for this presentation was a discussion of Form and Plan. She dispelled the notion that plan was integral to socialism and that capitalism represented planlessness. She did this by using Hegel's categories of form and essence as she read them in Marx's work. Dunayevskaya began her presentation by reviewing the "form" of labour under capitalism; significantly she started by firmly linking labour itself to "plan"—that is, a "capitalist plan". Under capitalism, then, labour is distinguished from previous historical periods by its "separation"—that is, separation from its means; separation of town from country; and separation of mental from manual labour. However, there is a moment of "reunification" that Dunayevskaya argued occurred when labour was introduced to the factory and the purpose of reunification was the extraction of as much labour as possible. This, she told her audience, was plan: "This plan of the capitalist gave the labour process its despotic form."[72] Further, in the face of growing workers' revolts, the capitalist (as a class rather than an individual) instituted the tyranny of the machine over living labour. While Dunayevskaya argued that this increased the "despotic form" it also had an unintended effect: "At the same

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replaced Luxemburg as my chief 'enemy'. ... for ourselves we must be very clear that Engels throughout the period of Marx most mature work [sic] in economics, the period 1850-1870, contributed not a single idea. ... not only are the ideas fully Marx's, worked out by himself alone, but even after they had been worked out, Engels did not fully grasp or keep up with the leap" (Archive #9235). For a subsequent example of Dunayevskaya's critique of Engels see: *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 8. Further, it is not surprising to find that George Novack (many years later) published a defense of Engels, see: George Novack. "In Defense Of Frederick Engels." Web page, 1975 [accessed 1 August 2006]. Available at http://www.themilitant.com/1995/5943/5943_24.html. Where "stalwart" SWPers turned to Engels, Dunayevskaya turned to Hegel.

[72] Archive #9250.

time the machines which disciplined the labourers also organized and united them, and now their revolt assumed new form: that of an organized mass power."[73] This effect of organizing labour into a mass power brought Dunayevskaya to Marx's revolutionary conclusion that the despotic form could only be undone by "freely associated men" in the form of cooperative labour. Now, Dunayevskaya argued, the relationship of planning to anarchy shifts: "So that the opposition is not between 'anarchy' and 'plan', but between the plan of the capitalist which is always despotic in form, and the plan of freely associated men which is always cooperative in form and in content."[74] Note plan now takes on a dual nature, like that of the commodity, labour, and value itself, under capitalism. Dunayevskaya's casting of "plan" as both present under capitalism and as a good to be pursued under socialism flew in the face of established orthodoxy that counter-posed the anarchy of capitalism to socialist planning. This error "crept" into post-Marx Marxism, she argued, by the failure of its theorists to remain rooted in production, that is in the value form.

In order to convincingly make her argument about the centrality of value and form, Dunayevskaya turned to Vol. III of *Capital*, which she noted had been previously underestimated by the Tendency's work. Here she recalled the Tendency's observation of the importance of the falling rate of profit as a "law of capitalism"; however, now she tells her audience what that "law" means. We find a beautiful, speculative sentence: "falling rate of profit is the theory of surplus value". In other words, the composition of capital (that is dead over living labour, the dominance of machine over human labour) leads to a tendency in the rate of profit to fall because the extraction of surplus value, that is the exchange value of a commodity, is human labour. Sadly, Dunayevskaya noted, the capitalist pursues greater levels of exploitation, extracts more surplus value only to find (the tendency) that profits fall. In other words, the self-development of capitalism is not driven by competition (a point Dunayevskaya has previously raised in her correspondence with James in August 1949) among capitalists but by the class antagonism that defines its form; that is, profits will fall even if there is only one capitalist in the market. As she wrote:

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[73] Archive #9250, underlining in original.
[74] Archive #9253, underlining in original.

> It is all so clear: Since the realization of surplus value is the decline in the rate of profit, the poor capitalist must search for profits. However, add Marx, you market theorists who think this decline is due to competition are wrong. And as for you, the planners, who think that the reason for the capitalist's search for profit is "only" his subjective desire and your plan to do away with the disproportions of his production should knock some sense into his head, are way off the beam. First of all, his subjective desire reflects only the objective truth of his method of production… . Secondly, competition merely averages out the rate of profit, without either producing the decline or the anarchy. Finally, and above all competition itself arises from the immanent laws of capitalism. So we are back to production where the relationship of constant capital (machines) to variable (living labour) produces the whole mess.[75]

To truly get to the "heart" of surplus value, Dunayevskaya argued that one must understand the value form. In an effort to make this form clear to her audience while remaining true to Marx, she broke down her analysis into four key points, summarized below:

> (1)Recall that the "value-form of the product of labour makes it appear as if value were an "objective" quality of the

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[75] Archive #9256.

> commodity"... "in reality it is nothing but my labour materialized in some object."
> (2) Now, Dunayevskaya argued, technology is constantly revolutionizing production, making a "joke of capitalistic value". "Value is constantly depreciating yet the value-form remains dominant both over the content, labour, and over the whole of society, the capitalist included."
> (3)Further, Dunayevskaya instructed her audience, keep in mind that the organic composition of capital "means that the unpaid hours of labour do not come to [the capitalist] as 'pure profit' (surplus value) but must go to pay for the machines... ."
> (4)Finally, returning to her earlier acknowledgment of the organizing force of machines and factory, Dunayevskaya argued "the labourer has become a social individual, and the development of the value-form... has had its opposite development ... in the forms of revolts... as a mass body... ."[76]

Further to these points, without the value form of capitalist production, that is surplus value, there would be no commodity to exchange in the market. Hence, Dunayevskaya argued that Marx abandoned his analysis in the *Critique* and turned to *Capital* in which he rooted all social relations in production to labour expressed in the value form. Profit itself, for example, is a category that can only be derived from the value form and can only be analyzed from the perspective of production.[77] The market, as we understand it under capitalism, appears as it does because of production relations – although, it is "veiled" in mystery by the commodity-form.

Given this analysis, Dunayevskaya argued that several conclusions follow logically. The first was that crisis was not "external" to production, but the very product of the mode of production. That is, crisis does not mark the system because there has been a failure to "plan" but because the pursuit of the "plan" for capitalist production results in crisis (this was a direct challenge to an underconsumptionist thesis, such as that deployed by Luxemburg, but the argument was not particularly developed here). Second, focusing on market exchange, as do many post-Marx Marxists as well as bourgeois-economists, effectively ignored the class nature of capitalism and the basic antagonism that resulted in a system of production founded on the dual nature of labour to produce exchangeable (that is, commensurable) commodities. Finally, Dunayevskaya's analysis not only supported the state capitalist thesis, which was also derived from value theory, but pointed to a very different conception of state and workers revolution. It is this final conclusion that took up the remainder of Dunayevskaya's notes.

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[76] Archive #9273-9275, underlining in original.

[77] Hence Marx's previous statement quoted in this Chapter that he had overturned all previous notions of profit—in classical political economy these are derived from a "cost of production" analysis; even though thinkers such as Smith and Ricardo subscribed to labour as the source of value. They did not understand the dual nature of labour and its resulting value, that is, they did not approach the phenomenon dialectically.

Cooperative Labour and Smashing the State

As previously noted, Dunayevskaya's studies involved a very careful rereading of *Capital* in light of the world objective conditions experienced by Marx as he drafted different versions of his expansive work. Two experiences were always highlighted by Dunayevskaya. The first was Marx's decision to go "into the factory" by taking a practical course for workers.[78] The second, was Marx's historical interpretation of the significance and potential of the Paris Commune. In the case of the first, Dunayevskaya argued that his entry into the factory itself fundamentally altered his perception of capitalism, such that he dispensed with his continuation of the *Critique* and focused exclusively on *Capital*, adding the chapter on the "Working Day". The second experience was derived from watching the unfolding of the Paris Commune in 1871.

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[78] Archive #1730 and Archive #1590.

Dunayevskaya argued that the Commune demonstrated to Marx the possibility of realizing a cooperative form of labour and the necessity of "smashing the state." She had already repeatedly cited Marx's argument that only "freely associated men" can "plan" such that the value form of production (and all its attendant alienating and exploitative relations) can be overcome.[79] The Commune demonstrated for Marx a real attempt to overcome production relations and to implement planning done by cooperative labour. It was his conclusion, though, about the state that was of particular significance to Dunayevskaya and which she argued ultimately reinforced her state capitalist analysis.

> ... as Marx stated... the conception of the state as the "executive committee of the ruling class" was rather abstract and did not contain in it the smashing up of the state, which he only got from the Commune. ... what is important here, is that until the workers with their new form showed concretely the smashing up of the old and the establishment of the new, Marx fought Lasalle's state socialism only in general and for his utter stupidity in considering that the particular type of state—Bismarck's Germany—to be of any use. With the Commune, however, the attack isn't just against the particular state, but any and all but the Commune form of state must be smashed so that a cooperative form of working and living and the abolition of the division of labour between mental and manual may finally make labour "not merely a means to live but is in itself the first necessity of living... with the all-round development of the individual...".[80]

From here, Dunayevskaya "leaps" forward to the early years of the USSR and the Great Depression. Now, she argued, the capitalist plan was apparent in the New Deal and in its opposite Nazism. The end of World War II confirmed that capitalism could plan. So what of the USSR? Here is where the failure to understand the particular form "trips up" Marxist theorists (such as Hilferding, Luxemburg, Bukharin, and Trotsky). The error resulted in support for the Soviets and the failure to recognize either the central role of value or that it was still operable in Russia. Viewing this historical "record", Dunayevskaya was forced to ask how Soviet theorists could stray so far from Marx's analysis (and others outside of Russia fail to see the capitalist nature of the "workers' state").[81] Her conclusion was that it was not simply the result of a misunderstanding of value, although that was the foundation for the error, but also that the state plan was "... presented as the change in the form in which the distribution of social labour appears."[82]

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[79] There is an almost overwhelming temptation to use Hegel's term "sublation" in place of "overcome". However, I will resist.
[80] Archive #9276-9277, underlining in original.

At this point, Dunayevskaya broke-off her presentation with a brief overview of how the Tendency could make more concrete the analysis of bureaucratic plan to ensure that it was not mistaken as a "new form" and that cooperative labour would take a central place in the analysis of realizing a change in the form of social production. The presentation notes resume on January 14, 1951 and it is clear that Dunayevskaya wrote them after the completion of the first presentation. She utilized the second presentation to ensure that her point of despotic plan vs. cooperative labour plan was clear. She then moved ahead to Lenin's analysis of monopoly and finance capital with the intention of reminding her audience that the value form still dominated in an age of imperialism. In other words, she left no doubt that all "epochs" must be analyzed from the perspective of the production process. As she noted:

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[81] Archive #9279.

[82] Archive #9279, underlining in original. Marx's discussion on the necessity of changing the form is taken from his Letter to Kugelman, July 11, 1868: "It is self-evident that this *necessity* of the *distribution* of social labour in specific proportions is certainly not abolished by the *specific form* of social production; it can only change *its form of manifestation* [Dunayevskaya translated this as "appearance"]. Natural laws cannot be abolished at all. The only thing that can change, under historically differing conditions, is the *form* in which those laws assert themselves. And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself in a state of society in which the interconnection of social labour expresses itself as the *private exchange* of individual products of labour, is precisely the *exchange value* of these products." Marx and Engels, *Collected Works,* Vol. 43, p. 67.

> In the period of monopoly capitalism the value-form assumed a new form to befuddle the minds of men outside of production. Marx called the capital-form (or "value big with value") the most fetishistic and perverse of all transformations of value-forms since it appears completely unconnected with production.[83]

However, finance capital did "befuddle" many theorists, with the exception of Lenin. Dunayevskaya argued that Lenin's identification of monopoly recognized a transformation of "competition which at the same time connects with the fundamental attributes of capitalism."[84] Unfortunately, Russian state-planners, noted Dunayevskaya, were not inclined to any analysis that was rooted in production and value theory. Here she ended the presentation with a promise for a future consideration of the capital form. In a sense, this was the unfinished work of Lenin that made itself apparent through state capitalist analysis. In a subsequent letter to James, she made this point more forcefully:

> ... our present task assumed concreteness in suddenly seeing that Stalinist planning has a long list of ancestors from Proudhon through Bukharin and Trotsky and that Marx anticipated all this when he hit at Proudhon for wishing to bring order (and in a capitalist world it could only be the capitalistic order of the

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[83] Archive #9285.

[84] Archive #9287. Although, she acknowledged that Lenin "grasped the essence" he did not deal specifically with the capital form in a theoretical way. As she noted in the presentation, *Imperialism* was intended as a "popular outline" and not a philosophical treatise. In her letter to James following the presentation, Dunayevskaya also made a stunning observation with regard to monopoly: "Monopoly is the fetter; monopoly is not the centralization [or capital], it is the one killing the many" (Arcive #1733). There are far-reaching implications from such a suggestion; however, we will set these aside for the time being.

> factory) into the market by "organized exchange" and then brought Proudhon back for a knock-out blow in Vol. II … .[85]

If rooted in the process of production and the possibility of a cooperative form of labour, as Dunayevskaya's analysis revealed, one cannot view Stalinist planning as socialism; nor can one ignore the mechanism of discipline and planning present in capitalist society.

Conclusion

Although the time-span covered in this chapter is little more than 12 months, the theoretical coverage of Dunayevskaya's studies is much more expansive. At the outset of the Chapter the key purpose of this period was identified as the application of Hegelian categories to *Capital*. The correspondence and essays covered in the Chapter demonstrate how Dunayevskaya was becoming increasingly "unmediated" in her understanding and use of Hegelian philosophy. Of course, Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, *Imperialism*, and the *Imperialism Notebooks* still loomed large for Dunayevskaya; but, James' *Notes on Dialectics*, so powerful at the outset of 1949, had by the close of the year firmly receded to the background. The material covered in this Chapter demonstrated the consolidation of three aspects of Dunayevskaya's intellectual development. The first was her re-reading of *Capital* and engagement with Marx's transitions and development. The second was the solidification of the Tendency's state capitalist theory, now rooted in a critique of rationalism and the Hegelian dialectic. And the third was throughout the material reviewed in the Chapter, the emergence of Dunayevskaya's philosophy and intellectual independence were becoming more sophisticated and more obvious. Each of these elements warrants further discussion below.

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[85] Archive #1731, underlining in original.

Returning to *Capital,* having already studied in depth Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* (recall that Dunayevskaya translated this material to facilitate James' *Notes on Dialectics*), forced her to take both Lenin and Marx at their word and dialectically engage the structure and argument of Chapter I, Vol. I on the Commodity. Dunayevskaya's approach to this study was two-fold. First, she engaged the manner in which Marx developed his argument, noting his transitions from the 1840s forward, while also making connections to objective world conditions (such as the Paris Commune) and moments when Marx returned to Hegel's philosophy. Second, she applied Hegel's doctrines of Being and Essence to Marx's discussion of the commodity. The theoretical insights this afforded her were dramatic. No longer is the "labour theory of value" an empty assertion; for Dunayevskaya value was the form that defines the capitalist mode of production. This was not an economic category, as it was in earlier writings, but the source of the self-development and self-movement of capitalist production. All identity, difference, and contradiction—the dialectic itself—become present in the commodity form. It also meant that human beings are the historical agents that matter, even though the form of capitalism obscured labour and the centrality of production for all social relationships. Dunayevskaya had consistently asserted value as the defining feature of capitalism, but by her own correspondence, this renewed study revealed the content of value in a meaningful, revolutionary way.

The re-reading of *Capital* also brought into bold relief the place of "plan" in capitalism. At a time when state planning was being touted as the realization of socialism, Dunayevskaya demonstrated that Marx had already posed plan as part of the despotic form of capitalism. Value driven production (not private property), in this sense, must plan. The extraction of ever increasing surplus value (particularly in the face of workers revolts and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall) required the "plan" of the factory, the imperial practice of states, and the coordination of global capitalist production to manage economic crises (Dunayevskaya cited the Marshall Plan as a key example). So long as value dominated social production, that is, as long as labour was the source of value, the mode of production was capitalist – whether in the United States, Europe, or Russia. State capitalism was no longer an assessment of the Russian situation; it was the philosophical lens for viewing the post-World War II world. By the close of 1951, it was also clearly the precursor of Marxist Humanism as the human agent and the search for freedom now forms the core of state capitalist analysis.

While Dunayevskaya was personally making huge forward strides in her philosophical development the Tendency was at a moment of consolidating its perspectives. In this sense, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was also an important marker in the Tendency's political and theoretical orientations. This essay provided the opportunity for the Tendency to attempt to outline a different path for the Fourth International, particularly by articulating a rejection of the Party's support for Tito. Arguably, at the very least *State Capitalism and World Revolution* demonstrated that the Tendency very consistently applied its state capitalist analysis to emerging world events. It is clear that the break with Trotsky was finalized at this time. It is little wonder that Johnson Forest would find that it no longer had a place within the international Trotskyist movement—a movement that the Tendency had come to view as theoretically misguided and politically bereft.

The most significant element to emerge from this period, however, was Dunayevskaya herself. First, she spent this period combining philosophical study with her active participation in the Miners' Strikes and labour organizing. From her correspondence and news articles, it is clear that human beings, living different subjectivities (for example, her consideration of the political role of the miners' wives), are in combination the revolutionary subjects she wishes to engage. For Dunayevskaya, class analysis meant understanding the central antagonism (wage labourer to capitalist) of the commodity form of production; however, this did not limit the potential for identifying revolutionary agents—in fact, it expanded it. Because Dunayevskaya focused her analysis on production, she was able to see the social organization that resulted and the ways in which class divisions coordinated with gender and racial oppression. The application of Hegel strengthened this reading as it is a philosophy that as a whole works toward the reunification of subject and object to realize freedom. Freedom understood through the analysis of Marx meaning "freely associated" human beings who can realize their individual fulfillment.

Although I have asserted that this was the period of Dunayevskaya's emergence, it is not my assertion that she had completed her philosophical birth. In fact, one element remained missing at the close of this period. Dunayevskaya had done an exceptional job at this point of examining Hegel's Doctrines and identifying the essence of the production process. However, she had in several instances asserted that Marx moved from Essence to Notion in Vol. III of *Capital*. Yet this argument does not really develop beyond an assertion. Moreover, in *State Capitalism and World Revolution* there was also the assertion that "we were living in the age of ultimates" but this argument also remained under-developed. We are left with the impression, then, that something is missing. In this sense, we break-off our discussion in early 1951 without moving beyond Appearance and Form. The philosophical and political insights are staggering and important; yet, incomplete. Rather, we must wait until Dunayevskaya "discovers" Hegel's Absolutes in May 1953 before Marx's humanism becomes concrete in Dunayevskaya's philosophy. It is to that end we turn.

Chapter Ten

Rupture

Introduction

The previous Chapter concluded that Dunayevskaya's philosophical studies had made tremendous strides and that her engagement with Hegel's philosophical system was substantial; however, the Chapter also reached the conclusion that her theoretical understanding remained somewhat incomplete in the sense that the movement from Essence to Notion was noted but not concretely articulated. This Chapter traces Dunayevskaya's moment of philosophical breakthrough that allowed her to begin to articulate Notion as a concrete category in Marx's works. It is also the task of this Chapter to trace the final contribution of the Johnson Forest tendency to Dunayevskaya's development (philosophical and organizational). With this dual task in mind, the Chapter will first examine the "objective conditions" of Johnson Forest, including: the resignation from the Socialist Workers Party (August 1951); the formation of *Correspondence* (September 1951) which included the completion of a draft of the "Lenin Book" (1952); "the new divide in Marxism" marked by a significant schism within Johnson Forest and Dunayevskaya's "philosophical moment" (1953); and the formation of News and Letters (1955). Notably, Johnson Forest did not operate in a historical vacuum, and it is evident throughout this period that the rise of McCarthyism in the United States and the global conditions of bipolar "Cold War" also affected the political and organizational opportunities of the moment. Outside of the United States, Dunayevskaya also marked the death of Stalin in 1953 as a world-historical moment, though this became a point of serious friction within the Tendency itself.

Dialectically, these world-objective conditions and the objective conditions of Johnson Forest had significant impact on the ideas and theories of the Tendency in general and Dunayevskaya in particular. Thus, the second task of the Chapter is an examination of two letters written by Dunayevskaya in May 1953, considered in the context of "a new divide within Marxism". These letters, most often referred to as the "Hegel letters", were identified by Dunayevskaya as the philosophic moment for the realization of Marxist Humanist philosophy. It is in these letters that Dunayevskaya identified Hegel's "Absolute as New Beginning" and was able to move her analysis from Essence to Notion in a deeply theoretical way that provided the foundation (one is tempted to say ground) for the subsequent 34 years of philosophical inquiry she pursued. It is also notable that her recognition of the "philosophical moment" was not in hindsight. These two letters figured prominently in the formation of News and Letters Committees and were included with the first documents printed by the organization in 1955. In other words, the foundation for a different organizational form that departed from the concept of "Party to lead" and *Correspondence*, also resided in the philosophical breakthrough of 1953 and warrants consideration in this Chapter.

Having accomplished the dual task outlined above, the Chapter will close with a brief overview of News and Letters as a new organizational form and will collect the philosophical insights of Dunayevskaya into an overview of Marxist Humanism. Unlike the previous three Chapters which engaged in a close textual reading of correspondence among Tendency members, this Chapter covers a broader time frame (nearly four years) and returns to the practice of focusing analytical attention on pamphlets and published articles and drawing on personal correspondence as a means to draw out insights that may not be immediately apparent in the documents themselves. Ultimately, this Chapter, as highlighted in its title, is about personal and philosophical rupture for the Tendency and for Dunayevskaya. It is also about the culmination of significant theoretical and practical work by Dunayevskaya. In this sense, while the Chapter is the concluding point of our consideration of Dunayevskay's philosophical development, I also hope to preserve the sense that it is not exclusively an ending, but more importantly, a New Beginning.

Leaving the Socialist Workers Party and International Trotskyism

Over the course of the nearly 25 years of philosophical development covered in this and previous Chapters, it is impossible to deny that it reads as a history wrought with "breaks" and departures. However, it is also the case that each of these transitions represent moments of tremendous growth in Dunayevskaya's personal philosophical development. Consider the key moments previously addressed: the 1939 break with Trotsky on the Russian question led to Dunayevskaya's first essay on state capitalism; the 1947 break with the Workers Party led to the intensive period of philosophical study; and we will recount here how the 1951 break with the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International opened the way for experimentation with a new form of political organization and created the space for Dunayevskaya to fully differentiate herself from James.

As was recounted in the previous Chapter, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was a damning critique of the Socialist Workers Party and international Trotskyism that not only drew a response from the Socialist Workers Party majority but opened the ground for the Tendency to clearly delineate itself from the leadership and political commitments of the Socialist Workers Party. Dunayevskaya referred to the response penned by Warde and Wright in a letter to James dated April 27, 1951. Obviously, the Tendency was involved in a discussion about how to respond to the critique; yet, Dunayevskaya was quite definitive: "I do not see any point to answering the document of Warde and Wright which is neither an answer to our document written prior to the convention, nor to our challenge at the convention that we are interested not in an abstract discussion of state capitalism but in the concrete question of the nature of Stalinism and how to fight it... ."[1] She went on to offer some "ad hoc" remarks about the argument put forward by Warde and Wright. Notably, the theoretical weakness that Dunayevskaya attributed to them also related to her critique of Luxemburg and Bukharin – the fatal flaw here was the failure to acknowledge that the accumulation process was the domination of constant labour (dead labour) over variable labour (living labour). As she noted:

> Watch this sequence: Let's take Rosa Luxemburg first. The "single" theoretical blunder which made her roll off the Marxist rails was the question of accumulation of capital—the denial that c/v was the basic law of capitalist development. The minute she denuded that discovery of Marx (In actuality Marx added only three economic categories, constant and variable capital, and labour power; value and surplus value he gave specific refinement but they were among the discoveries of classical bourgeois economics; same holds true also of class struggle: it is its development to the dictatorship of the proletariat which is new, and Marxian, not its mere existence.) of its class character and said even as W & W (p. 14) that in the "abstract form" it was true of "any and all economic systems"... . So that this one error of not seeing the specifically capitalistic nature of c/v which Marx so

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[1] Archive #9308.

> labouriously analyzed led this orthodox Marxist to revise Marx's CAPITAL.[2]

Dunayevskaya, after remarking on Warde and Wright's failure to also address the national question, closed the letter with the sentiment that the Tendency's upcoming resolution on the international situation would adequately deal with these items and that "... we leave W & W just where they are."[3]

Although there is no further correspondence on the question of a formal response to Warde and Wright, Dunayevskaya did compose "an answer" which was circulated in June 1951. Likewise, the Tendency also circulated its "Resolution on the International Situation" on May 21, 1951. Before turning to a brief consideration of these two documents which effectively set the terms of the Tendency's withdrawal from the Socialist Workers Party, mention needs to be made in regard to Natalia Trotsky. Although intermittent, Dunayevskaya continued to be in touch with Natalia Trotsky through the 1940s and 1950s.[4] In a letter dated March 22, 1951, Dunayevskaya indicated that she was forwarding a copy of *State Capitalism and World Revolution* to Trotsky. While the archives do not preserve Trotsky's response to this document (if there was one), her own assessment of the Fourth International was felt profoundly when she announced her resignation from the movement on May 9, 1951. When completing their final "Balance Sheet" in August 1951, the Tendency referenced this resignation, quoting from Trotsky's letter directly. For the purpose of context and chronology, it is useful to highlight Trotsky's reasons for resigning from the Fourth, effectively severing the living link between the movement and Leon Trotsky.

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[2] Archive #9308-9309, underlining in original.
[3] Archive #9311.
[4] While perhaps not pertinent to this discussion, Dunayevskaya's "In Memoriam" to Natalia Sedova Trotsky is a moving piece that not only acknowledges the place of such a woman in the revolutionary leadership but gives recognition to those women who were not theoreticians in the struggle but were (and are) nonetheless the bedrock of revolution. See: "In Memoriam: Natalia Sedova Trotsky" in Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, pp 71-77.

Though once critical of Dunayevskaya for breaking with Trotsky, Natalia Trotsky maintained that had Trotsky lived he would have arrived at an assessment of the Soviet State that would have been similar to a state capitalist position. Effectively, this was the argument mobilized by Trotsky in her resignation letter:

> Obsessed by old and outlived formulas, you [the Fourth International] continue to regard the Stalinist state as a workers state. I cannot and will not follow you on this. ... Time and again he [Trotsky] pointed out how the consolidation of Stalinism in Russia led to the worsening of economic, political and social positions of the working class... . If this trend continues, he said, the revolution will be at an end and the restoration of capitalism will be achieved.[5]

Moreover, she argued that the Fourth's position on Russia amounted to "... saying that Stalinism has carried out a revolutionary socialist role."[6] Finally, she took issue, as did the Tendency, with the Fourth's Yugoslavia position:

> I find it impossible to follow you on the Tito regime in Yugoslavia. All the sympathy and support of revolutionists and even all democrats, should go to the Yugoslav people in their determined resistance to the efforts of Moscow to reduce them and their country to vassalage. ... But your entire press is now devoted to an inexcusable idealization of the Titoist bureaucracy for which no ground exists in the traditions and principles of our movement.[7]

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[5] Natalia Sedova Trotsky. "Resignation from the Fourth International." Web page, May 1951 [accessed 4 April 2005]. Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/sedova-natalia/1951/05/09.htm. See: note 20 in Cahpter 7 for an extended discussion.
[6] Trotsky, "Resignation from the Fourth International", full-text.
[7] Trotsky, "Resignation from the Fourth International", full-text.

Like Trotsky's resignation letter, Johnson Forest's resolution on the International Situation also took issue with the direction and theoretical weakness that attended the rise of Pabloism in the Fourth International.[8] The resolution closed with a damning critique but also a realistic appraisal of the Tendency's position in the International movement:

> Every line written by Pablo merely exemplifies this fundamental retrogressionist thesis. It is a total capitulation to Stalinism. ... "Johnson Forest" has no illusion whatever about its own positive role in the correction of the false policies of the Fourth International. ... It is more than probable that the practice of the Fourth International may be changed before the theory. But at the present moment the primary theoretical task is the destruction, root and branch, of the theories that have been put forward by Pablo and which have been successfully challenged so far only by "Johnson Forest".[9]

Given the Tendency's overall conclusions that the Fourth International was wrong-headed in both its practice and theory, it is not surprising that the Tendency would shortly decide to leave the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International. It is also apparent that there was a growing dissatisfaction with the very idea of a vanguard party among the Tendency membership, although the resolution was ambiguous on this point.

Subsequent to distributing the text of the Resolution, Dunayevskaya also wrote "The Revolt of the Workers and the Plan of Intellectuals: an Answer to Comrades William F. Warde and John G. Wright" dated June 5, 1951.[10] Given the strength of her response in this document, the reader would have no sense that she had initially felt no further response was needed besides the Resolution. It seems reasonable to conclude that Dunayevskaya was not entirely satisfied with the text of the Resolution or that the Tendency decided more needed to be done to address the differences with the Socialist Workers Party as distinct from the international movement. Whatever the reasoning, the "answer" as she entitled it was a powerful testament to her own understanding of Marx's theory and the implications that follow when Marxists, as she put it in her letter to James, "roll off the Marxist rails". In her view, Warde's and Wright's argument was an attempt to create the impression that Johnson Forest's position was ultimately one that would lead to inactivity, an "ideal system" that arose because "... the monstrous phenomenon of Stalinism has set the thinking of 'Johnson-Forest' reeling backward to a 'museum of pre-Marxist antiquities'."[11] However, Dunayevskaya quickly noted that the core element of *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was a treatment of the Stalinist revision to Marxist political economy. These revisions, well discussed by the Tendency and enumerated again in this article, were virtually ignored by Warde and Wright. Dunayevskaya asserted that the clinging to the notion of private property was the critical error, as she queried rhetorically: "Is it not clear that Comrades Warde and Wright imprisoned in their concept of state property equals workers state, cannot fight the Stalinist revisions without first revising their theory of state property?"[12]

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[8] The troubled history of the Fourth International is beyond the scope of our consideration here. Pabloism refers to Michael Pablo who took over leadership of the Fourth International in the post-war years. The Fourth International would split into two organizations (and many factions) in 1953 with a subsequent (although disputably successful) reunification in 1963.

[9] Archive #1423.

[10] Both of these documents were included in "The Balance Sheet Completed: Ten Years of American Trotskyism", which was dated August 1951, Archive #1438-1475.

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[11] Archive #1424.

[12] Archive #1425. It should be recalled here that in the Workers Party the Tendency was fighting bureaucratic collectivism; whereas, the Socialist Workers Party had followed Trotsky's line on the defense of Russia – that is, the USSR was a workers state, though degenerate. Interestingly, and a point that the Tendency would highlight shortly, both approaches ignored the fundamental revisions imposed by Stalinism on the teaching and application of Marx's key analytical categories.

Without rehearsing Dunayevskaya's now well-trodden argument about the capitalist nature of the Soviet Union, it is important to note that her "answer" to Warde and Wright again went to the heart of *Capital* by asserting the centrality of c/v, that is, the social relationship that is at the centre of capitalistic production. As she wrote:

> "In dealing with the c/v relation," writes Comrades Warde and Wright, "one remains in the general sphere of PRODUCTIVITY, equally applicable in this abstract form to any and all economic systems." ... It never fails to appear among Marxist theoreticians who have failed to grasp the essence of Marxism for their specific epoch in strict relationship to the revolutionary activity of the masses. Each stage of capitalist production has posed only two alternatives: either the self-activity of the workers or the plan over the workers. A terrible trap awaits those who do not hold tight to this.[13]

In other words, Dunayevskaya again demonstrated that it was the human element that distinguished Marx's analysis and opened the way for a revolutionary and dialectical understanding of capitalism as a particular mode of production. In this regard, her response to Warde and Wright was most damning:

> Hence, where the political economists began their analysis of capitalism with labour as the source of value, Marx began CAPITAL with the concept of labur-power, the worker as creative subject. ... The fetishism of commodities expresses on the market level what the c/v relationship expresses at the level of production—that the human being does not control the thing, but the thing controls the human being.[14]

In the final analysis, the critique of Warde and Wright against Johnson Forest was founded in the opposition to a political position that viewed the Soviet Union as a capitalist society. Moreover, Warde and Wright could only sustain their opposition by ignoring the Stalinist revisions to Marx's key analytical categories from *Capital*. This was somewhat ironic, as Dunayevskaya noted in her article, as the Soviets had for the most part acknowledged the centrality of value (if not the capitalistic nature of their economy) in their revision to economic teaching.[15] Further, Dunayevskaya challenged Warde and Wright (in name, but the challenge was really to the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International) to acknowledge that "getting the fundamentals wrong" in *Capital* had severe theoretical outcomes and political consequences. According to Dunayevskaya, not only had Warde and Wright missed the centrality of the workers in the revolt against the mode of production but they also resorted to supporting a notion of vanguard party that ignored proletarian power as the driving force of both revolt and revolution.[16]

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[13] Archive #1426, underlining in original.
[14] Archive #1432.

Although the Tendency responded to the critique put forward by Warde and Wright, it was quite apparent that Johnson Forest could not remain in the Socialist

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[15] Archive #1432.

[16] The reader may recall that *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was divided into 11 sections, one of which was entitled "The Theory of the Party." While note was made of the critique of vanguardism in the previous Chapter, I have not highlighted this aspect of the Tendency's transition; although, commentary on the importance of organization can be found throughout Dunayevskaya's work. CLR James biographer Kent Worcester actually asserts that SCWR "...announced his [James] break with the Leninist conception of the vanguard party..." (Worcester, p. 96). Aside from Worcester's practice of only attributing authorship to James, such a reading misses the subtlety and ambiguity that accompanied the Tendency's discussion of "the Party". What was absolutely clear was that Johnson Forest supported mass movements and believed that it was only through the creativity of the workers that revolution could be realized. As they argued in the Resolution: "The series of transitions by which, in the vast upheavals that face us, an admittedly small organization can be transformed into a party of millions, is a vain, idle – and in nearly all cases—a defeatist speculation. What is required is that with the consciousness of the greatness of its past and the certainty of its future, the vanguard perform the duties which face it [sic]. The mass creates its own organizations, overthrows sections of the old order, follows leaders, rejects them, and through this process meets the vanguard party which also has developed in the crisis" (Archive #1420).

Workers Party and that there was little likelihood of seeing their theoretical position reflected in the Fourth International more generally. In August 1951, the Tendency released "The Balance Sheet Completed: Ten Years of American Trotskyism" and formally withdrew from the Socialist Workers Party. The document boldly asserted that "The degeneration is now complete, the W.P. to Menshevism and the S.W.P to Stalinism."[17] As with the previous "Balance Sheet" which outlined the Tendency's evaluation of the Workers Party, this document also outlined key concerns, complaints, and theoretical disagreements that existed between Johnson Forest and the majority in the Socialist Workers Party. However, the document goes further than the previous iteration in that it was also the document which announced the Tendency's resignation from international Trotskyism (in a formal sense).[18] "What we knew from the start was that if we could not live in this party that was the end of all possibility of the party developing as a revolutionary organization… . We are leaving the Socialist Workers Party and in doing so, finishing forever with the wreck these two parties have made of revolutionary politics in the United States."[19]

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[17] Archive #1444.

[18] I note "in a formal sense" because while it was the case that Johnson Forest had very formally broken with Trotsky on the Russian Question and had seriously critiqued the theoretical weaknesses of Trotsky, there remained a deep respect for Trotsky's place in the history of revolutionary movements. Moreover, Trotsky's focus on revolutionary masses continued to be source of inspiration to the Tendency. Thus, it is not surprising that even here, in the document detailing the Tendency's decision to resign from the SWP we find this statement: "These hypocritical scoundrels [leadership of the SWP] have led a whole movement to disaster, ruined themselves and thousands of revolutionaries, besmirched the principles for which Trotsky fought all his life, all in the name of the defense of Russia…" (Archive #1445).

[19] Archive #1469.

The "Balance Sheet Completed" is quite a remarkable document. Again, we see the summarizing of key Tendency positions; however, with each iteration, the theoretical orientations and political commitments are made clearer and presented more concisely. Significantly, the "Balance Sheet Completed" went to great lengths not only to document the Tendency's assessment of the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth, but to highlight those "subjectivities"— in addition to the rank and file workers-- that Johnson Forest had previously identified as revolutionary forces: women, youth, and Blacks. The Tendency's "Resolution on the International Situation" also specifically included a section which recognized the gendered effect of the capitalist mode of production:

> Inherent in monopoly capitalism is the degradation of women. Experience has shown that it is in the countries of nationalized property and planned economy without proletarian power that the degradation of women has reached its ultimate form. a) They continue to have thrust upon them the task of bearing and rearing the producers of the next generation under the most backward and inhuman conditions of capitalist housing, capitalist wages, and the miserable circumstances of capitalist domestic economy.
> b) At the same time they have been forced into heavy industry to work under conditions of extreme hardship and degradation.
> c) There have been reimposed upon them in Russia the most reactionary laws in regard to marriage, abortion and divorce.[20]

This analysis was furthered in the "Balance Sheet Completed" in a section entitled "The Women". Here the place and possibility of realizing a revolutionary subjectivity among women was linked specifically to the program pursued by Johnson Forest. As the document recounted:

> Small as it is, "Johnson-Forest" is already distinguished by the fact that its leading women cadres, not only in theoretical work but in

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[20] Archive #1417.

> all round capacities in all such spheres as they have been called upon to handle, not excluding the class struggle at its sharpest ... in every sphere they can hold their own with any women in any radical party in the country. Our younger women comrades, despite the strangulating atmosphere of the Socialist Workers Party are making rapid strides, from the seniors to the youngest recruits. They hold their own with the men in our tendency. The leadership sees that they do and spends more care on their education and opening up opportunities for them, precisely because of the resistance to bourgeois oppression that they represent.[21]

The "Balance Sheet Completed" went on to note that the Socialist Workers Party had little to offer women members (or Blacks or Youth) in terms of theoretical development or the ability to exercise leadership within the Party. Taken together, the "Resolution" and the "Balance Sheet Completed" clearly articulated the Tendency's commitment to the revolutionary aspirations of groups which were not limited to the rank-and-file workers. Moreover, the Tendency very clearly argued that there was a relationship between the proletariat and these other "subjectivities" that needed to be theorized and organized. As was noted in the "Balance Sheet Completed":

> What is true of the rank and file proletarian in general, is, as always doubly true of the Negro. ... After twenty years in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party up to 1948 had nothing to tell the Negroes except that they were oppressed. ... The Negro above all wanted a new way of life, a new way of thought and if even only in idea, a new mode of action. ...
>
> But whereas in relation to the Negroes the party stands helplessly by while they leave, in relation to the youth the Socialist Workers Party from 1940 is haunted by an underlying fear that there may be a repetition of the split of 1940. It therefore seeks actively and systematically not to develop youth work but to prevent the youth from splitting. There could be no greater indication of the remoteness of Socialist Workers Party politics from the revolutionary forces in the United States today.[22]

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[21] Archive #1465.
[22] Archive #1463, #1466.

Finally, the "Balance Sheet Completed" could not conclude without addressing the specific failures of leadership in the Socialist Workers Party. On the question of leadership, the "Balance Sheet Completed" waded into a psychological assessment of the Socialist Workers Party leadership that was not characteristic of previous documents. To a large extent, however, the Tendency's decision to engage at this level was a response to the discussion of "personality" (eg. Stalinist, Titoist, Maoist) that was becoming prevalent among the Leftist parties at the time. The Tendency noted:

> Despite our reserve and distaste for these matters [psychological discussions], its importance forced itself upon us. How is it possible for a revolutionary party, aimed at the overthrow of bourgeois society, to be led by men who openly discuss the past, present and future demoralization of each other and their comrades? The consciousness of the failure of nationalized property equals workers' state, the failure of the union policy, was obviously taking a heavy toll on the leadership. It used the same old words; but it knew that the words carried no meaning themselves. It isolated itself and the membership in rural surroundings where it could drown its sorrows and give some 'elbow room' to examination and soothing of the tortured personality. ... We held our peace but we could not help being concerned about a Marxist party, led by people whose politics had reduced them to this unfortunate condition.[23]

Thus, the Socialist Workers Party's leadership was viewed as completely demoralized, ineffective and theoretically bereft. The only reasonable action to follow such conclusions was the resignation of the Tendency from the Party. Notably, the archives also include a document entitled "Report and Discussion on Break with Socialist Workers Party".[24] The Report recorded the sentiments of a number of Tendency members in regard to the decision to break with the Socialist Workers Party. The overall sentiment of the speakers as recorded in this document indicated an eagerness to put aside the "straight jacket" of the formal Party. As one member reported: "Our break with the Socialist Workers Party now frees us to make this social milieu (women, youth, Negroes) the basis for our whole existence. This is the revolutionary politics of Marx and Lenin. More than ever it is today the only revolutionary politics."[25]

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[23] Archive #1473.

[24] Archive #1966-1985. This document makes it clear that the decision to break with the SWP was arrived at democratically and unanimously.

Correspondence

In the month immediately following the break with the Socialist Workers Party, the Tendency published a mimeographed bulletin entitled *Correspondence*. *Correspondence*, which Boggs indicated was named after the committees of correspondence from the American Revolution, was published in mimeographed form until 1953 when it was released in a newspaper format.[26] *Correspondence* continued to be published, albeit somewhat sporadically until 1962, even though the Tendency had disbanded in 1955. During the period that Dunayevskaya chaired *Correspondence* (1951 – 1955), James was arrested and detained on the basis of his immigration status and in 1952 he voluntarily left the United States for London. In her autobiography, Boggs recounted that the decision not to form a new Party was deliberate: "... we set out on our own with the view toward publishing our own newspaper and pamphlets that would mainly recognize and record the views and activities of rank-and-file workers, blacks, women, and youth – the four groups that we identified as revolutionary social forces."[27] In his consideration of *Correspondence*, Kent Worcester recounts: "... the paper's concern with popular culture and daily life was years ahead of its time. Unlike other papers produced in the heyday of Fordism, *Correspondence* openly discussed issues like human sexuality, male chauvinism, blue-collar discontent, and high school alienation."[28]

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[25] Archive #1966.

[26] Boggs, p. 67. The archives contain issues of *Correspondence* in both its mimeographed and newspaper formats: see Archive #2180-2209 for selected articles.

[27] Boggs, p. 67.

The *Correspondence* organization was intended to experiment with a different type of organizational form and to engage workers, women, youth, and Blacks in a conversation that was truly revolutionary. However, from the outset it was apparent that certain practical matters would have great impact on the overall success of the experiment – for example, James' inability to remain in the United States combined with his desire to maintain organizational control of *Correspondence* was a recipe guaranteed to lead to disagreement and power struggles among the leadership and the membership more generally.

The first hint of such trouble followed very quickly from the publication of the first mimeographed paper in 1951. The archives record two letters written by Dunayevskaya to James in regard to his "tone" and practice of leadership. In these letters, dated November 23 and November 27, 1951 Dunayevskaya raised James' tone (and treatment) as an impediment to her success within *Correspondence*. However, before examining her specific complaints, an earlier letter must be referenced. It was written by James on September 17, 1951 and was addressed to "Irv" (presumably a member of the Tendency). The Archive *Guide* indicates that this letter is demonstrative of James' position against "workers". What the contents of the letter disclosed was James' position in regard to organizing among the West Virginia miners (who were on strike at the time, as has been previously referenced). As he wrote: "If a mighty bubble broke out, 500,000 miners vs. John L. [John Lewis, CIO President] and shook the minefields, I would not budge an inch from our program. ... We could plunge in, spend our money, exhaust ourselves, publish, editorialize, and generally enjoy ourselves, and when it was over where would we be? Nowhere."[29] In a recent article Peter Hudis argues that it was "[nevertheless], different attitudes within [the Johnson Forest Tendency] ... toward the coal miners' strikes ultimately led to its breakup, although this did not become explicit until 1955."[30]

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[28] Worcester, p. 125.

Given Dunayevskaya's active participation in the Miners' general strike the previous year, it is not difficult to see how a line such as "generally enjoy ourselves" as written by James would be personally insulting to the members of the Tendency who were active participants, Dunayevskaya in particular. In her letter of November 23, Dunayevskaya wrote that she would "... take the bull by the horn by deepening the error in one essential respect but at least clearing the question of tone once and for all; it is long standing."[31] The implication of Dunayevskaya's letter was that James' "tone" had been raised as an issue before. Further on in the letter it is also apparent that a longer commentary on Dunayevskaya's behaviour had been offered by James; however, this commentary is not present in the archives. What she recorded, though, was quite strong and not without sexist overtones given the comments attributed to James:

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[29] Archive #9315.

[30] Peter Hudis, "Workers As Reason:The Development of a New Relation of Worker and Intellectual in American Marxist Humanism," *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 4 (2003): p. 277. Not insignificantly, as was noted in the previous Chapter, Dunayevskaya was very involved with the Miners in the 1949-1950 period. Here Hudis records: "In 1949-50 the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party had an active, albeit numerically small, local in Morgantown, West Virginia which was directly involved in the strike. Its Morgantown branch largely consisted of members of the Johnson-Forest Tendency (JFT), the opposition tendency inside the SWP... . JFT members played a significant role in the strike: several of its members worker in the mines, and they were instrumental in proposing and helping to set up the Miners' Relief Committee which garnered material aid for the wildcat from various union locals around the country" (Hudis, "Workers as Reason", p. 276). For a first-hand account combined with analysis by Dunayevskaya, see: Dunayevskaya, *A 1980s View: The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-1950 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, News and Letters, June 17, 1984.

> You [James] really weren't concerned with tone, because you told me how I should have behaved if I thought your tone wasn't good, and also apologized. No, you let out a blast not because of tone, but because you recognized that I was spreading myself thin, and must reorganize myself. In that you are absolutely correct and I am trying to do just that. But in that I am not sure I understand what you mean by my being a woman of which I am conscious enough. You seem to think that that has something important to do with my previously bad relations with Roberts. ...No doubt the fact we are women enters some but that isn't the question, whether some; it is how crucial is that fact. I'll tell you how I see it in the moment I am most worried: Stalin and Trotsky.[32]

The letter gives the impression that Dunayevskaya wanted to critique James, but did so very carefully, often taking responsibility for what she perceived as her own shortcomings in an attempt to (perhaps) soften her critique of James. The following letter makes this "softening" even more apparent.

The letter of November 27, 1951 clearly was written in response to James. He had apparently apologized for some of his accusations but maintained his right to make statements, such as one that Dunayevskaya's criticism "cramped his style". Dunayevskaya challenged his assertion in strong organizational terms:

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[31] Archive #9320. The "error" appears to have been in relation to her support for the Miners' strike and some previous comment on Dunayevskaya's relationship with a comrade identified here only as "Roberts".
[32] Archive #9321.

> I'll tell you why not. You have a special place not only in the organization but in history. I have been, indeed I should have been, most meticulously conscious of that fact and that's why I took bad tone without complain for so long. You are the present-day embodiment of M-L [Marxism-Leninism]. I'm not complimenting you. I'm stating a fact. You must now become conscious of that role organizationally as you are of it theoretically. …You know, however, what I fear most at this moment? That no one will turn against some poor trait like a bad tone precisely because it is the tone of the undisputed leader.[33]

Dunayevskaya went on to argue that tone had important implications for the newly formed *Correspondence*: "Tone does contain political overtones and in the establishment of entirely new relations between leaders and ranks that our organization aims at, it is necessary that the tone of the leader be one [one] wants to imitate, not to disregard."[34] Not surprisingly the issue of tone appears again in archival documents concerning the final split of Johnson Forest. In an assessment of the split, Dunayevskaya wrote:

> Tone is a part of method. Running like a red thread through all of J's letters is this tone. One of insolence, arrogance, insults one on top of the other, coupled with this an attempt at bribery, vulgar in its approach to the chairman [Dunayevskaya] of the group. Nothing is more like the Moscow trial than this attempt to make the chairman "confess". And then in the same breath the gall to say that she could come back and have her position with the unanimous consent of all.[35]

However, before pursuing in more detail the development of a philosophical and organizational schism within the Tendency, brief mention needs to be made of some of the other objective work that was ongoing. Specifically, notice must be taken of Dunayevskaya's completion of the "Lenin Book" in 1952.

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[33] Archive #9323, underlining in original.

[34] Archive #9324.

[35] Archive #2425. The quotation is taken from a letter in the Appendix to the Conference Bulletin, April 1955 which formed News and Letters.

As has been noted as various points in the past several Chapters, the Tendency had undertaken a serious study of Lenin with an eye to preparing a manuscript (to potentially be submitted to Marcuse) on dialectics, Lenin, and state capitalism. In 1947 Dunayevskaya had prepared a manuscript outline that was submitted to Marxist economist Joan Robinson for feedback.[36] In February 1952, Dunayevskaya completed her "first draft" on what was now called the "Lenin Book".[37] In her correspondence leading up to the February distribution of the draft, Dunayevskaya carefully highlighted the recent organizational experiences and theoretical work that had a significant impact on the new draft. Specifically, she cited her work on "form and plan" (discussed in the previous Chapter); the experience of developing the organizational form for *Correspondence;* and the concrete effort of preparing materials for the members' plenum. As she outlined in her letter:

> ... it is well we know the new conceptions that will form the underlying assumptions of the present writing as distinguished from the many previous notes. First there was the convention and the central axis of Capital – cooperative form of labour vs. despotic plan – began to assume concrete form. ... Secondly, the preparation for the plenum and the plenum itself concretized for me much of Marx's commodity-form I did not see before. Specifically, that Chapter I of Capital was not only a counterposition of freedom of activity, plan of workers vs. plan of capital or value-form, but a hilarious take-off of the bourgeois political form – parliamentary democracy and the poor, poor genius Ricardo who thought he had done with the market but

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[36] See Chapter Seven for a discussion of this draft outline which was entitled "State Capitalism and Marxism", Archive #472 – 503.

[37] Archive #1740-1796. The Archive *Guide* records this as the "second draft"; however, the typed title, Archive #1740, reads: "FIRST ROUGH DRAFT OF THE LENIN BOOK Feb. 1952".

> couldn't get out from under exchange-value to see labour as more than "source" of value.[38]

Having laid out these "new" conceptions, Dunayevskaya also included a prefatory note to the draft in which she clearly stated: "The present book concerns itself with how Lenin had arrived at his politics by means of his philosophy. The landmarks in Lenin's development, 1914-1917 are: NOTES ON THE DIALECTIC, IMPERIALISM, A Popular Outline, STATE AND REVOLUTION. ... Lenin had broken through all Marxist economic categories and placed the proletariat in the center of all problems. That was his big leap and the great divide in Modern Marxism."[39]

It is clear from a further note included in the draft that Dunayevskaya viewed the manuscript as a joint project, noting that space was left for Boggs to submit her own chapters and that there was still a tremendous "way to go" to finish the project.[40] The actual text of the draft was mostly a reorganization of the studies undertaken by Dunayevskaya with regard to the development of Marx's *Capital* and Lenin's philosophical studies, which she argued were parallel experiences for each of the theorists.[41] In other words, in spite of James' later paranoia, there was nothing at this point (1952) to indicate that Dunayevskaya was preparing to leave the Tendency or develop her own manuscript outside of the collaborative work of the group. I raise this point because the ambiguity that surrounds the subsequent break-up of the Johnson Forest tendency is often linked to Dunayevskaya's "personal ambition". However, it is not personal ambition that radiates through her correspondence and writings of this period;

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[38] Archive #1738.
[39] Archive #1741, underlining in original.
[40] Archive #1743.
[41] Archive #1742.

rather, it is a commitment to the growing body of ideas that were becoming increasingly deepened and consolidated by the disciplined study of Marx and Lenin – typified in this draft manuscript.[42] Much of the material covered in this draft later appeared in Dunayevskaya's first book, *Marxism and Freedom* (1958); moreover, it is clear that this material was the product of her own intellectual efforts.

1953: the Death of Stalin and the Philosophic Moment

Objectively, the work of *Correspondence* continued in the subsequent months and years. However, the spring of 1953 was marked by Stalin's death. This "moment" became a pivotal turning point for the Tendency and for Dunayevskaya. In a historical narrative of the Johnson Forest Tendency written by Dunayevskaya on the occasion of the 25 year anniversary of the founding of Marxist Humanism, she recounted receiving the news of the death of Stalin: "That very same day [upon news of Stalin's death] I wrote a political analysis which stressed that an incubus had been lifted from the minds of both the masses and the theoretician; and that, therefore, it was impossible to think that this would not result in a new form of revolt on the part of workers."[43] However, Boggs was the acting editor for *Correspondence* for that month and she significantly edited the content of the article Dunayevskaya submitted. As a result, the article which initially argued that Stalin's death was the beginning of a new moment of revolt was revised to highlight the disinterest of American workers at the news of Stalin's death. Because of this significant editorial change Dunayevskaya protested Boggs' decision and, after the exchange of what Dunayevskaya termed "polemical letters" the original submission was printed in the April 30, 1953 edition of *Correspondence*.[44]

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[42] Boggs certainly makes no equivocation about her assessment of Dunayevskaya's personal ambition, noting in her own biography: "Raya's genius, in my opinion, was not so much in the ideas she developed and espoused but in the audacity with which she conceived of herself as a revolutionary philosopher and leader in the tradition of Hegel, Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxemburg, and the single-mindedness with which she organized all her personal and political relationships toward the goal of making a reality of this self-concept" (Boggs, p. 101). James' opinion seemed to soften over time, as Kent Worcester recounts: "James reflected on the decline of the Correspondence tendency in a letter to Glaberman penned in 1962. 'The movement which we started,' he wrote, 'has been broken up almost to bits.' He then sketched the personalities of Dunayevskaya and Lee [Boggs], the formidable women who had led the 1955 and 1962 splits from Correspondence respectively: 'There was Rae, an old Bolshevik, very highly trained and very dedicated… Next on the list is Grace, a very highly capable person. All that Rae gave us to use in experience and knowledge of Bolshevism Grace gave us in philosophy and a general high level of education. I cannot forget not only what the movement but what I personally owed to both of these girls [sic]. We as an organization could not forget it either. If we forget it or ignore it or pass superficial remarks about it, it means that we don't know what we had and therefore we don't know what we are now without" (Worcester, pp. 143, 144).

It was not that the article had been edited which particularly distressed Dunayevskaya. It was that Boggs' editorial changes erased the contributions of Charles Denby, a "rank-and-filer" who worked with Dunayevskaya on the article (he would later become the worker-editor for News and Letters) and that Boggs had elevated the indifference of some workers in a single factory over the world-historical significance Dunayevskaya believed attended Stalin's death. From Dunayevskaya's perspective, she was quickly proven right in her assessment of the significance of this event as the East German workers revolt followed in May and June 1953, making it a top story in the newspaper-formatted *Correspondence* released in October 1953.[45] The East German revolt was followed within two weeks by a massive strike at Vorkuta, a slave-labour camp in Russia.[46] Even more tellingly, the lead story for the first paper was about the Beria purge, which reported on the Russian bureaucracy's response to Stalin's death:

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[43] Dunayevskaya, *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, p. 3.
[44] Both articles are included in the archives, see Archive #2180 and Archive #2193. Boggs' editorial change to the introduction of the article focused on factory women exchanging recipes rather than demonstrating interest in the announcement of Stalin's death.

> The East German revolt had so shaken up the Russian bureaucracy that it brought about the first form of deStalinization. Though it was not yet designated as deStalinization, the truth is that Stalin's heir tried hard to disassociate himself from the immediate causes of the totality of the Russian crisis. Thus, the post-Stalin rulers stopped the Korean War; shot Beria, the head of the Secret Service and the most hated man in the totalitarian bureaucracy; and instated some mild reforms, such as a turn to consumerism... .[47]

Although the "Stalin exchange" between Dunayevskaya and Boggs demonstrated a fundamentally different reading of world-objective conditions, it did not prevent Dunayevskaya from distributing two letters in May 1953 to Boggs and James on Hegel's Absolutes. By all accounts, Dunayevskaya identified these letters as containing the philosophical breakthrough that allowed her to consolidate Marx's thought into a philosophical orientation that she named Marxist Humanism by 1955. Given the importance Dunayevskaya attributed to these two letters, we will take up each below.

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[45] Archive #2200-2208. The East German workers revolt was in defiance of new "working norms" that were being imposed by the Soviets in an attempt to increase worker productivity.

[46] Archive #12042. Dunayevskaya wrote about Vorkuta in a draft article entitled "Two Pages of Today's History that have shown the way to Freedom". Significant parts of this material was used for chapter 15 in *Marxism and Freedom*.

[47] *Twenty-five Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, p. 4. Although not pertinent here, Dunayevskaya's identification of these "mild" reforms (which were in keeping with her mid-1940s analysis of the Russian economy) has recently been explored by Jukka Gronow, *Caviar With Champagne Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia*, 1st ed ed., Leisure, Consumption, and Culture (Oxford : Berg, 2003).

Letters on Hegel's *Science of Logic* (May 12, 1953) and *Philosophy of Mind* (May 20, 1953)[48]

The first impression to strike one reading Dunayevskaya's letters on Hegel (1953) is the excitement of discovery which infused every line. As was noted at the close of the last Chapter, Dunayevskaya was increasingly referencing "Notion" and "Absolute" in her writings but seemed to be missing a concrete expression of this final category in Hegel's system. In these two letters she effectively went beyond Lenin's treatment of Hegel's "Absolute Idea" to read Hegel in the context of Socialism as a universal "beginning" externalized in "the party"; this new beginning reaches its complete form in the new society.[49] As Hudis and Anderson note in their introduction to a collection on Dunayevskaya's writings on dialectics:

> On the whole, radical interpreters of Hegel in this century have emphasized such aspects of his thought as the master-slave dialectic and the unhappy consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, or the concepts of essence, negativity, and contradiction in the *Science of Logic*. While Dunayevskaya addresses these issues, we believe that her core contribution to dialectics centers on what many other Marxists have ignored or rejected – Hegel's concept of *absolute* negativity. ... Such a negation of the negation is no mere

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[48] The two letters under consideration here have been reproduced many times by Dunayevskaya and News and Letters. The originals can be found in the archives, Archive #1797-1812. While I have used the archival copy for the May 12, 1953 letter, I am here using the version published in the *Power of Negativity* for the May 20, 1953 letter. Its text is the same and any editorial changes made in subsequent reprintings have been noted by the editors, Hudis and Anderson.

[49] Lenin noted that it was in Hegel's final chapter that he "stretched his hand" to materialism; however, Lenin did not see any particular merit to Hegel's final paragraph. Here Dunayevskaya took great issue with Lenin: "There Lenin stops—it is the beginning of the last paragraph—and he says: 'This phrase on the last page of the Logic is exceedingly remarkable. The transition of the logical idea to Nature. Stretching a hand to materialism. This is not the last phase of the Logic, but further till the end of the page is unimportant.' But, my dear Vladimir Ilyitch, it is not true; the end of that page is important; we of 1953, we who have lived 3 decades after you and tried to absorb all you have left us can tell you that" (Archive #1803, underlining in original).

> nullity, for the positive is contained in the negative, which is the path to new beginning.[50]

Ironically, for many, Hegel's notion of the Absolute Idea is often interpreted as declaration of the "end of history". In fact, Hudis and Anderson note this was Engels' understanding which was transmitted to post-Marx Marxism.[51] Thus, we may conclude that what follows, both immediately in the letters under discussion here and in Dunayevskaya's subsequent philosophical works, is nothing less than a radical reclamation of Hegel's philosophy of beginning, freedom, and new society.

It should be noted, however, that these letters are still exemplars of Dunayevskaya's development, not a fully formed philosophy. This caveat is important because it reminds the reader that: (1) we are following Dunayevskaya's process of intellectual development, and (2) this work is foundational for the "trilogy of revolution" which takes shape in the many years following these moments of discovery. While it would be possible to expend considerable time focusing on each paragraph and Hegel reference contained in these letters, I will endeavor to draw out only the main conclusions or insights insofar as they contributed to Dunayevskaya's philosophical thinking and theoretical work.

The first letter dated May 12, 1953 focused on the last chapter of the *Science of Logic* (Absolute Idea) but also drew on the last chapter of *Phenomenology of Mind* (Absolute Knowledge). Dunayevskaya announced at the outset of this letter that "... in the dialectic of the Absolute Idea is the dialectic of the party and that I have just worked it out."[52] For Dunayevskaya, the Absolute Idea was the "posited dialectic in itself" and its realization, its completion, was the overcoming of the separation of theory and practice to realize liberation and freedom. Quoting from Hegel, Dunayevskaya noted:

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[50] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. xviii.
[51] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. xix.

> Let's begin at the beginning: "The Absolute Idea is now turned out to be the identity of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea..." At this moment this means to me that the party is the identity or unity of the activity of leadership and the activity of the ranks. "Each of these by itself is one-sided and contains the Idea itself only as sought Beyond and an unattained goal; each consequently is a synthesis of the tendency, and both contains and does not contain the Idea..." And further down on the same page we have the warning that the Absolute Idea "contains the highest opposition within itself."[53]

Throughout the letter, Dunayevskaya applied her new insight into the Absolute Idea directly to the party. As she noted at the outset, she was "...concerned only with the dialectic of the vanguard party of that type of grouping like ours, be it large or small, and its relationship to the mass."[54] This focus allowed Dunayevskaya to argue:

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[52] Archive #1797.

[53] Archive #1797, underlining in original.

[54] Archive #1797. Hudis and Anderson record the "of" in this sentence as "or", explaining in a footnote "We have inserted 'or' here, given Dunayevskaya's opposition to the vanguard party" (Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 30). While I do not think it particularly important to quibble over this change, it does, I think, slightly change Dunayevskaya's meaning and asserts a stronger break with vanguardism than was apparent at this point in Dunayevskaya's development. Part of the issue, I think, arises from the different emphases that fall on the term "vanguard" after Stalin's perversion of the "party". Lenin's own conception of the relationship between Party and Mass changed over the course of his revolutionary experiences and his engagement with philosophy. Likewise, Dunayevskaya was also attempting to work out a theory of organization, of activity here that I do not believe needs to be further weighted down by over laden terminology like vanguardism – which is not to say that I am dismissing the importance of organizational thinking or the insight of the relationship of theory and practice (a new praxis Dunayevskaya attributed to Lenin, see Archive #3239). Dunayevskaya made her own distinctions clear in a draft overview she wrote on the "new organization" in July 1953 which will be discussed following the Hegel Letters.

> …our object is the party and that we are working out the triangular relationship not only politically but philosophically; …the party is the totality, the mediated result of the three layers and at the same time it is what it is by its relationship to the proletariat outside, on the one hand, and to the universal of socialism, on the other hand, except that the two are now not "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" but interpenetrated.[55]

Moreover, we can also see here the culmination of Dunayevskaya's work on the question of "form". Once she made the move from "objective logic" (that is, the categories of Being and Essence) to realize "subject" or "subjective logic" (that is, the Notion) she was also able to incorporate the new "form" of the Absolute Idea which is Absolute Method. As she noted: "In party both as political organization and as the realization of theory of knowledge, the 'form-determinations' or form of relations between leaders and ranks, between the various layers, and within each layer tells the whole story."[56] And, what is this whole story? Here, Dunayevskaya turned to Hegel's discussion of method, that is beginning as "internal intuition".[57] She went on: "…note the contrast between 'the immediate of sensuous intuition' and which comes from that which is, from the way, we would say, the third layer lives, and the 'internal intuition' of the leader which comes from the way he thinks."[58] Subjective and objective knowledge, theory and practice are united in "... 'the dialectical moment [that] consists in the positing of the unity which is contained in it'... . But this is not self-movement through contradiction, this is negation of negation, the second movement – '...it is the innermost and most objective moment of life and Spirit, by virtue of which a subject is personal and free.' ...NOW WE STAND UP AND SHOUT PERSONAL AND FREE."[59]

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[55] Archive #1798, underlining in original. Hudis and Anderson footnote "three layers" as follows: "CLR James developed a concept of "three layers" after the Johnson-Forest Tendency left the Socialist Workers Party, patterned on his interpretation of Vol IX of Lenin's *Selected* Works" (Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Andreson, p. 30). Further, the triangular relationship that Dunayevskaya referenced in this letter is part of her draft discussion piece for the July 1953 Correspondence Convention.

[56] Archive #1799.

[57] In an attempt not to clutter our discussion of Dunayevskaya's "breakthrough" I have not included in the text full explanations of the Hegelian vocabulary that is being deployed here. Where appropriate, as in this situation, a fuller quotation will be included as a note. Dunayevskaya noted that she was very interested in a distinction that Hegel introduced between "sensuous intuition" and "internal intuition". She wrote: "1)method only has to have a beginning and so that is where we must begin, 2)but this beginning (and he [Hegel] warns later that 'neither in actuality nor in thought' is there any beginning 'so simple and abstract as is commonly imagined') is not 'the immediate sensuous intuition" which is 'manifold and individual', 3)no, this beginning is 'internal intuition'" (Archive #1800).

At this point in the letter, we can see the fruition of the "philosophical correspondence", the discussion of the second negation, and the introduction of freedom as the "end" and "beginning" of Hegel's philosophy. Dunayevskaya closed this letter by arguing that it was the case that the Tendency was now in a position to "pass Lenin" to grasp the meaning of the aphorism he first asserted, which was "Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world but creates [it]."[60] She turned back to *Capital* and asserted:

> Just as Marx's development of the form of the commodity and money came from Hegel's syllogistic U P I, so the Accumulation of Capital (the General Absolute Law) is based on the Absolute Idea.
>
> Remember also that we kept on repeating Lenin's aphorism that Marx may not have left us "a" Logic, but he left us the dialectic of bourgeois society: the state capitalism at one pole and the revolt at the other.[61]

Finally, she concluded:

> Perhaps I am stretching but I feel that in the Absolute General Law when Marx was developing the dialectic of bourgeois society to its limit and came up with revolt "united, organized, and disciplined"

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[58] Archive #1800.
[59] Archive #1801.
[60] Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 212.
[61] Archive #1804.

> he also set the limits to the dialectic of the party which is part of bourgeois society and will wither with its passing as will the bourgeois state. It appears to me that when objective and subjective are so interpenetrated that the preoccupations of the theoreticians [and] the man on the street is can we be free when what has arisen is the one-party state, the assertion of freedom, "personal and free" and full liberation takes precedence over economics, politics, philosophy or rather refused to be rent asunder into three and wants to be one, the knowledge that you can be free.[62]

With this last exhortation, Dunayevskaya closed the letter with the sentiment that the "real history of humanity" was about to begin and that "... the Hegelian concept of speculative reason comes to life with us, as never before, though on our basis."[63]

In a parenthetical aside in her May 12 letter, Dunayevskaya requested a copy of *Philosophy of Spirit(Mind)* from Boggs as she believed it held further insight into the question of understanding freedom philosophically. Her May 20, 1953 letter was the product of her engagement with the *Philosophy of Mind*, among other texts, she opened the letter by outlining the historical development of the vanguard party which, she argued, reached its historical culmination in the *Correspondence* paper:

> Something *totally new* appears – 100 years becomes practically no more than mere background for listening and digging... . What is so remarkable is that it comes *not* as direct result of any revolution, but rather as the accumulated experiences and feelings and social thinking *when* placed in the proper theoretic and climatic atmosphere of live people.
>
> To this the paper is the climax not alone because it has never been but because it *could* never have been.[64]

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[62] Archive #1805. References to Marx, *Capital a Critique of Political Economy. Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1915), pp. 707, 836-837.
[63] Archive #1805.
[64] That is, without the accumulated experience she noted above, see: Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 25.

Having drawn the lineage from vanguard to *Correspondence*, Dunayevskaya revealed the focus of this second letter—to deepen her concrete view of Subject and Object present in the concept (or Notion) of new society for which she claimed "the elements" were "everywhere in evidence".[65]

Dunayevskaya drew on the *Philosophy of Mind* to explore the desire for and appearance of free will realized in Hegel's assertion of the Absolute Mind.[66] As she noted:

> If we go from this audacious thinking directly to the Free Mind or end of Section 1 of Mind Subjective, we will meet with free will in a new social order. "Actual free will is the unity of theoretical and practical mind: a free will, which realizes its own freedom of will, now that the formalism, fortuitousness and contractedness of the practical content up to this point have been superseded. By superseding the adjustments of means therein contained, the will is the *immediate individuality* self-instituted – an individuality, however, also purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e. with freedom itself."[67]

It is the drive of free will, to liberty, that Hegel argued was expressed by "social individuals" in the concrete development of history; or, as Dunayevskaya expressed it, "Hegel cannot avoid *history*".[68] Again, she drew on Hegel's text to underscore the drive to freedom: " 'If to be aware of the idea – to be aware, i.e., that men are aware of freedom as their essence, aim, and object – is matter of *speculation*, still this very idea itself is the actuality of men – not something which they *have*, as men, but which they *are.* '"[69] Thus, Dunayevskaya concluded that the Idea itself is animated by and IS freedom. Moreover, she offered a speculative sentence that encapsulated this philosophic moment: Absolute Mind is the new society.[70] Significantly, Dunayevskaya argued that the movement that recognized Absolute Mind is effected by a development from nature to theory, that is: "The movement is from the logical principle or theory to nature or practice *and* from practice not alone to theory but to the new society which is the essence... ."[71] It is this relationship, that is, between practice and theory, that first inspired Dunayevskaya in the May 12 letter in which she identified the relationship and interpenetration between "living" and "thinking"; however, at that point she ended with the "sense" that more needed to be developed on the question of freedom. Here, in the May 20 letter, she answered that "missing element" with Absolute Mind concretely realized through activity and cognition, the essence of which was the historical drive for liberty and freedom. To make this more concrete, Dunayevskaya drew attention to the Paris Commune and the early Soviets:

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[65] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 25. One must resist the temptation to criticize what appears to be an overly optimistic assessment of the status of present-day society (or in this case, 1950s society). Dunayevskaya's point here (and developed in later works) was that the "elements" are the activities of groups (subjectivities previously identified as Blacks, Women, Youth, workers) which by these activities demonstrate a desire for freedom. To realize the new society, dialectically speaking, it must be present in the old. How do we know its presence? By these "elements", that is, their presence and activity. This is at the core of recognizing a unity of theory and practice.

[66] Depending on the translation, "Mind" is alternatively translated as "Spirit".

[67] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 27.

[68] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 27.

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[69] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 27.

[70] "...*Philosophy of Mind* which, to me, is the new society. *That's* what materialist reading of the final chapters of Hegel means to me" (Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 26). While well beyond the scope of our discussion here, the use of the "speculative sentence" by Hegel has particular philosophical significance, as is argued by Merklinger: "According to Hegel, a speculative sentence (or 'philosophical proposition') is a sentence or statement in which the subject and predicate not only refer to logical categories or universals but also articulate both the identity and distinctiveness of the two referents in a way not found in a normal sentence. Unlike a normal sentence, both terms of the speculative sentence are to be comprehended as subject terms that mutually determine each other's meaning through a 'dialectical movement' between the terms themselves and also between the human subject thinking the relations between the two terms and himself or herself" (Philip M Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821-1827* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 12).

[71] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 28.

> I cannot help but think of Marx concluding that the Commune is "the form at last discovered to work out the economic emancipation of the proletariat," and of Lenin in Vol. 9 saying that the workers and peasants "must understand that the whole thing is now *practice*, that the historical moment has arrived when theory is being transformed into practice, is vitalized by practice, corrected by practice, tested by practice," and on the same page: "The Paris Commune gave a great example of how to combine initiative, independence, freedom of action and vigor from below with voluntary centralism free from stereotyped forms. And so I repeat Mind itself, the new society, is "the mediating agent in the process."[72]

Taken in combination these two letters represented a moment of clarity and breakthrough for Dunayevskaya. As noted at the outset of the section, these are still fragmentary expressions of the philosophy that was still being worked out. In fact, Dunayevskaya's most detailed treatment of Hegel is not undertaken until the 1970s in her second published work, *Philosophy and Revolution*. However, the significance of these letters is not that they are complete, enclosed philosophical systems – or even that they are complete expositions on Hegel; rather, the significance derives from the identification of absolute negativity as a positive path to liberation; one that is founded on a unity and interpenetration of theory and practice. Vulgar notions of vanguardism and the one-party state cannot stand as revolutionary organizational forms, but neither can capitalist society deliver freedom because of its class nature. Hence, for Dunayevskaya, the Absolute Idea is new beginning, as she would later write.

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[72] Dunayevskaya, Hudis and Anderson, p. 29.

The "Hegel Letters" were never commented upon by James. Dunayevskaya recorded that he promised to engage these letters after the July 1953 Convention; however, he did not.[73] Arguably, Dunayevskaya's philosophical engagement with the Absolutes and her focus on absolute negativity surpassed James' own philosophic understanding and engagement with Hegel.[74]

Our Organization and News and Letters

As was referenced above in the discussion on the "three layers" and organizational form of *Correspondence*, Dunayevskaya presented a draft document to the first (and only) Convention to be held by *Correspondence* in July 1953. The document was entitled "Our Organization: American Roots and World Concepts".[75] In many ways, this document is a fascinating read because of the insight it provides into the organizational thinking that was driving Dunayevskaya (particularly in the context of the "Hegel letters); however, I am only going to briefly address the document for its overview of the philosophy underlying the *Correspondence* organization. The document began with a more detailed historical account of the "objective" historical conditions which both gave rise to the Johnson Forest tendency and the Tendency's decision to leave Trotskyism "once and for all." To a large extent this is very well-trodden ground for the

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[73] Dunayevskaya, *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism*, p. 3.
[74] One may recall that when Boggs first identified the two movements of negativity, the first negation and the negation of negation, James did not particularly engage her argument other than to say there was "too much" revolution in her writing. Dunayevskaya recorded that Boggs called the letters the "equivalent of Lenin's Notebooks for our epoch" (Dunayevskaya, *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism*, p. 3).
[75] Archive #2042-2116.

Tendency; however, Dunayevskaya also used the document to outline the foundations of the new organization. As she noted:

> ... we wish to make clear that although Marx and Lenin have written most profoundly, we recognize that history moves on. The circumstances under which Lenin worked and from which he drew his ideas of a party have now passed. Lenin ... sought to build a party according to certain principles because the Social Democracy refused to seize power. We live in the epoch of state-capitalism and, far from being faced with the problem of the Communist Parties refusing to seize power, we see them seizing power and crushing the workers movement. It is clear that no small vanguard party can overcome these monsters. Only a vast mass party of millions can. Only a vast mass party of millions can. Only the workers can build such a party. If they want it, they will build it and if we have capacities and talents in that direction, they will recognize us, but they do not need us to tell them what to do. We are not telling the workers what they "should" do, but because our whole conception shows that only in them lies the future and salvation of humanity, we are telling them what we are and what we propose to do.[76]

The human "foundation" for the new organization was seen to be vested in three layers, the intellectuals, the trade unionists, and the rank-and-file members (including Blacks, Youth, and Women). One of the key concerns voiced by Dunayevskaya in this document was about the relations between these three layers. As she noted in a section recounting the history of ill relations within the Socialist Workers Party: "... the problem of our age: how to keep in the age of state-capitalism the relations between leaders and ranks free from the bureaucratism that pervades the whole of society."[77] With the relations of "ranks" and "leaders" at the forefront of her consideration, Dunayevskaya proposed two key elements for the new organization:

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[76] Archive #2091.
[77] Archive #2069.

> One. We hold to public view not just our policies, but our internal relations: between ranks and leaders, between leaders and leaders, between ranks and ranks, between the organization and the periphery outside.
> Two. We propose to publish a paper that is of, for, and by the workers but which at the same time incorporates within it the history, experiences and principles of 100 years of Marxism, which is the theoretic expression of the struggles and aspirations of the world working class as a class.[78]

As far as the internal structure of the organization was concerned, Dunayevskaya likened it to a triangle: "…at the sides of the triangle are the political, intellectual leadership and those with considerable trade union experience while at the base is the rank and file."[79] Dunayevskaya went further with a strong (and apparently pointed) warning to the leadership: "That is what our organization consists of. And the relations between them seems now to be the key to our future progress. …It is true the leadership has these accomplishments to its credit, but it also true that the leadership is in grave danger of sliding into the same pit that the leadership of the old organizations have fallen in."[80]

With her history and warning presented, it is clear that Dunayevskaya greeted the new organizational form as one bearing great potential. In fact, her "Hegel Letters" also made evident her support for *Correspondence* and her belief that the "three layers" could organize in such as way as to enact the unity of theory and practice in a manner that would realize new human relations and that would contribute to revolutionary social change. Given that Dunayevskaya and a majority of *Correspondence* members would subsequently form a new organization in April 1955, it would be easy to conclude that *Correspondence* as an organization failed. However, a contrary argument can also be made; that is, that *Correspondence* succeeded in realizing the openness in relationships that Dunayevskaya outlined above. However, the risk in such openness was, obviously, that struggles within the leadership could (and did) lead to membership departures.

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[78] Archive #2097, underlining in original.
[79] Archive #2099.
[80] Archive #2101.

As has been referenced throughout this Chapter, by 1954 the relations within the leadership of *Correspondence* were becoming strained. It is also at this time, December 1954, that the organization was listed by the Attorney General as a subversive organization. The response of *Correspondence* to being listed is a disputed history. However, what was clear, as Dunayevskaya noted in her twenty-five year retrospective, was that "in the two years between leaving the Socialist Workers Party and the appearance of *Correspondence* there had developed in the followers of Johnson a great diversion from Marxism as well as from the American revolution."[81] Dunayevskaya argued that Johnson ultimately "broke up" the organization, forcing her to leave and form News and Letters in the spring of 1955.[82] To a large extent, the events leading up to Dunayevskaya forming News and Letters are merely of historical interest; what is significant, though, is that the formation of News and Letters for the first time recognized the humanist element of Marx's philosophy in a concrete organizational structure.

The founding meeting for News and Letters was held in April 1955. The new group set about to publish a paper, the first of which was released in June 1955 on the anniversary of the East German revolts. In November 1955, News and Letters distributed copies of Dunayevskaya's "Hegel letters" and her translations of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* (these are the first English translations made publicly available). In July 1956

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[81] Dunayevskaya, *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, p. 4.
[82] Dunayevskaya, *25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, p. 4.

News and Letters held its first convention and adopted its Constitution and Bylaws. Dunayevskaya became the chairwoman of the organization and its primary theoretician. The humanism she identified so many years prior in the *1844 Manuscripts* and the categories of *Capital* was now the foundation for a new form of organization, a new paper, and a new commitment to recognizing the "movement from practice to theory".[83]

Conclusion

The temptation here is to continue with Dunayevskaya through the formation of News and Letters and on to the publication of the first book length statement of Marxist Humanism, *Marxism and Freedom*. However, to do so would be to risk losing sight of the tremendous philosophical development that was required to realize the formation of News and Letters in the first place or for Dunayevskaya to be philosophically prepared to lead the organization in a manner that did not replicate the errors and failures of the older organizations. So, resisting the temptation to move ahead, it is valuable to highlight those elements of the 1951 – 1955 period covered in this Chapter.

The Chapter began by asserting that discussion of this period of Dunayevskaya's development would necessarily involve a dual task. The first was to outline the objective conditions facing Dunayevskaya and the Tendency. This was accomplished in a fairly straightforward manner. The Tendency, as a result of acute philosophical differences, chose to leave the Socialist Workers Party and the Fourth International. They were not alone in this decision, as the Chapter noted: Natalia Trotsky also broke with the Fourth International in this period. Having left international Trotskyism and the Socialist

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[83] Archive #2571.

Workers Party in the United States, the Tendency endeavored to form a new organization and publish a bi-weekly paper. Thus, *Correspondence* was formed and successfully published until the split between Dunayevskaya and James in the spring of 1955. *Correspondence* as a paper and organization continued until 1962, at which time Grace Lee Boggs also split from James. In the spring of 1955, those members of *Correspondence* who wished to joined Dunayevskaya in the formation of a new organization named News and Letters. The major focus of the new organization was to put into practice the relationship between practice and theory Dunayevskaya had identified in her philosophical breakthrough of 1953. As an organization, News and Letters consolidated its existence with its first Convention in July 1956 and continues today under a virtually unchanged Constitution.

The second task was perhaps more difficult. The Chapter set out to trace the moments of philosophical development that marked the deepening of Dunayevskaya's insight into the Hegelian dialectic, organizational form, and Marx's humanism. In this regard, it was noted that moments of rupture and break were generally accompanied by theoretical breakthroughs for Dunayevskaya. In the period we reviewed here, Dunayevskaya made the critical connection between Hegel's "Absolutes" and the new society. Moreover, Dunayevskaya continued to read Hegel's categories into Marx's *Capital*, effectively making concrete the revolutionary role of absolute negativity.

In the Conclusion we will draw together the "red thread" that has flowed through each of Dunayevskaya's discoveries and philosophical insights – that is, the centrality of humanism to Marx's philosophy and its continuing relevance. We turn to that task forthwith.

Chapter Eleven

And from Theory as a Form of Practice

> *The Spirit of the time, growing slowly and quietly ripe for the new form it is to assume, disintegrates one fragment after another of the structure of its previous world. That it is tottering to its fall is indicated only by symptoms here and there. Frivolity and again ennui, which are spreading in the established order of things, the undefined foreboding of something unknown – all of these betoken that there is something else approaching. This gradual crumbling to pieces, which did not alter the general look and aspect of the whole, is interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a flash and at a single stroke, brings to view the form and structure of the new world.*
>
> From Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind,* p. 75

As was noted at the close of the previous Chapter, by 1955 Dunayevskaya had not only ended her long-time collaboration with CLR James and the Johnson Forest Tendency, but she had embarked on a new organizational experiment with the formation of the News and Letters Committees. However, the important, formative, philosophical moment for Dunayevskaya had occurred two years prior when she "broke through" Hegel's Absolutes and discovered that the practical idea and the theoretical idea unified were Hegel's Absolute Idea. Moreover, it was what Hegel called Absolute Method, that is, the negation of the negation, which opened new "vistas" of thought, unified practice and theory, and opened for Dunayevskaya the possibility of realizing human freedom in Marx's "revolution in permanence". This moment, captured in her letters to Grace Lee Boggs in May 1953, is the embodiment of her notion of "continuity and discontinuity" introduced in the first Chapter of this project. In other words, Dunayevskaya's philosophical moment – or more precisely the body of work which was realized in that moment – both broke with dominant interpretations of Marx's relationship to Hegel, while maintaining a continuity with the historical impulse of individuals to be free. As was quoted at the outset of this project: "Whereas only great divides in epochs, in cognition, in personality, are crucial, and may relate to turning points in history, no discontinuity can really achieve that type of new 'epochal' moment unless it has established continuity with the historic course of human development."[1] Hence, when announcing her "discovery" of Hegel's Absolutes, Dunayevskaya immediately linked it to "the party" – that is to the organizational form taken on by the human impulse to be free. In her self-identification of the 1953 moment she defined it as a "divide" in Marxism, recognizing that her own theory and practice necessarily diverged from established and orthodox Marxism. Certainly, it was the realization of an epochal moment by her definition. We may also not be surprised that this breakthrough occurred in 1953, after the death of Stalin and in the midst of the lead-up to the East German workers' revolts. And, closer to home, the battle against automation in the mines and factories was being waged by workers. Moreover, in the midst of McCarthyism, Black consciousness and the civil rights movement was on the cusp of breaking forth with concrete demands for freedom. We may recall that in one of her own letters tracing Lenin's, Luxemburg's, and Trotsky's transition in

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[1] Dunayevskaya, *Guide*, p. 59.

1903 she commented that something must have been "in the air"; it appears that "something" was in the air in 1953.[2]

In this final Chapter, we will briefly review the key elements of Dunayevskaya's philosophical development in the period between 1930 – 1955. The intent is not to reprise the material covered in detail in each of the Chapters, but, rather, to pull through the "red thread" that links the key discoveries and analyses developed by Dunayevskaya over this formative period. The Chapter closes with its own "speculative moment" as we consider how Dunayevskaya's philosophical work may inform scholarship today and our understanding of the capitalist mode of production based on her humanist reading of Marx.

Pulling the "red thread"

In order to consolidate the expansive materials, discussions, theoretical innovations, and philosophical breakthroughs that mark this detailed reading of Dunayevskaya, it is useful to draw these together into three general themes. The first theme is the centrality of value and state capitalist analysis. The second is Dunayevskaya's development of an expanded notion of revolutionary subjectivity. The third theme, and arguably the capstone of Dunayevskaya's development by 1955, is her view of Marxism as a philosophy of freedom. Each of these themes is taken up below.

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[2] Archive #1702.

Value and State Capitalism

Chapter Two traced Dunayevskaya's development of a position on the "Russian Question" that was fundamentally distinct from Trotsky's view that even under Stalinization Russia was a "workers' state, though degenerate". That was the political line of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States and of the Fourth International. Dunayevskaya was not alone in rejecting Trotsky's position, as was evidenced by the formation of the Workers Party in 1940. However, the break-away group also did not follow a state capitalist line. Rather, the majority of the Workers Party supported variations of the bureaucratic collectivist position. Conversely, Dunayevskaya approached the question of the nature of the Russian state from within the production relations of Stalin's five-year plans. In this regard, Dunayevskaya was true to Marx's *Capital* and her analysis led to the conclusion that the law of value was operable in the USSR (a fact that was later demonstrated by the change in teaching *Capital* implemented by the Soviets). Given her analysis, reviewed in detail in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, Stalin's Russia was clearly a capitalist society. As the state capitalist position was furthered collaboratively within the contours of the Johnson Forest tendency, we find that the "despotic" nature of the plan was not simply an oddity of Stalin, but was an imperative of a mode of production that only functions through the accumulation of capital via extraction of surplus value from humans, that is, variable capital. State capitalism, then, was the full realization of Lenin's monopoly stage of capitalism.

What was particularly significant about Dunayevskaya's state capitalist position was that although she began her analysis in 1939 from the perspective that the law of value was primarily an economic category, her reading of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,* combined with empirical study of the Soviet Union, drew her analytical attention to the human composition of the category in Marx's work. Moreover, Dunayevskaya came to realize that it was value that imbued society with its class character. Thus, the very admission that the law of value continued to operate in Russia was proof-positive that Russia was a capitalist state. What was more shocking, perhaps, for Dunayevskaya was that this argument could be rejected by Marxists (such as Oscar Lange) or excused, as Paul Baran effectively did in his response to Dunayevskaya's assessment of teaching *Capital* in the Soviet Union.

Overall, Dunayevskaya's independent arrival at the understanding that the Soviet Union did not represent a workers' state, but was in fact the negation of such a state, offers not only a unique perspective on history, but gives us the necessary conceptual tools (grounded in Marx) to identify the composition of capitalism. Moreover, hers is a lesson in challenging orthodoxy and dogmatic thinking. The insights derived from studying the state capitalist approach include understanding the nature of production, the effects of statified property and the ideological manipulations that were applied to Marx's texts to justify and excuse exploitative and undemocratic social conditions. Although there is a temptation to say that the "collapse" of the USSR makes this history superfluous the very fact that western thinkers on the Right and the Left were shocked at the "sudden" demise of Russian communism demonstrates that the type of analysis conducted by Dunayevskaya has not penetrated intellectual thinking or scholarship. The failure to critically engage the question of the nature of the USSR or to apply a state capitalist analysis and thus "miss" the "end" of communism speaks to a critical and intellectual deficit on the Left, in particular. One might reasonably ask: "if they missed something as significant as the fall of the USSR, what else is deficient in the variety of post-Marx Marxist approaches?"

Revolutionary Subjects

The question of the revolutionary agent of change is rarely posed by orthodox Marxism. The answer is obvious: the proletariat. And, to a large extent, Dunayevskaya did not disagree. In order for the revolution to be realized it must, by definition, redefine the relations of production so that the "cooperative form of labour" may be realized. However, Dunayevskaya's own formative experiences growing up in a racially segregated America and her participation in Negro organizations demonstrated for her, in objective terms, that movements "outside" of trade unions and labour movements could also make claims against the capitalist state that would weaken the imposed social order and create space for solidarity and – *in potentia* – revolution. Chapter Five investigated Dunayevskaya's development of a position on the "Negro Question" with particular focus on her use of Lenin and Trotsky on the "National Question" to argue that at certain world-historical moments it was necessary to support bourgeois national movements in order to challenge the imperialist expansion of capitalism. Support for the self-determination of Blacks in the United States demonstrated a sophisticated assessment of the intersection of race and class. As was apparent from her critique of Myrdal's study (1944), Dunayevskaya was much more attuned to the presence of radicalism within Black masses. However, her support for Negro organizations was not generally accepted in either the Workers Party or the Socialist Workers Party – something Trotsky had critiqued as American chauvinism. Ultimately, both the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party failed to adopt programs that supported independent mass movements. Significantly, both parties repeated the same error, in Dunayevskaya's assessment, when it came to adopting positive programs and positions on women and youth. As was discussed in Chapter Ten, by the 1951 resignation from the Socialist Workers Party, the Tendency's very organizational structure reflected the important role these "other-wise constituted" social identities could play in realizing a "new society".

Dunayevskaya's Marxism was freed from narrow orthodoxies (such as Leninist vanguardism or economic over-determinism). This enabled her to see revolutionary subjectivities existing beyond the working class. Such an approach, which "failed" to privilege the working class as the only source of revolutionary potential, was never likely to win the support of the American Left; however, it did open new vistas of analysis (and hope) to theorize the relationship between workers and other "independent mass movements." From her earliest writings on the role of Negroes in the Revolution to her subsequent reflections on the revolutionary significance of women's and youth movements, Dunayevskaya articulated a very different (and some would argue, more promising) revolutionary subject. That being said, Dunayevskaya is no Chantal Mouffe; while recognizing the importance of other struggles, she maintained an analytical focus on the relationship (even, if at times it appeared more as a critical tension) between the so-called "classes" and "masses".[3] One can imagine that had she lived, Dunayevskaya would have found new hope in those social movements we uneasily group under the name "anti-globalization".

Marxism as a Philosophy of Freedom

Dunayevskaya's philosophical development stretches across all the Chapters that precede this conclusion; however, it was through the "philosophical correspondence" that we were able to follow Dunayevskaya's intensive period of study and meaningful interaction among the Tendency leadership. Although Dunayevskaya's 1953 "Hegel Letters" hold the place of the philosophical moment, it is clearly apparent that this was not a "road to Damascus" conversion. In fact, as was argued in Chapters Eight and Nine, the August 1949 correspondence laid the groundwork for the 1953 breakthrough. By this point in the correspondence, both Dunayevskaya and Boggs had surpassed James in their determination to go further with Marx via Hegel. It was Boggs who first drew attention to the importance of the "double movement" of negativity and, on August 16, 1949, introduced Hegel's "stages of freedom" and a "revolutionary" reading of Hegel's categories.[4] From this point forward, Dunayevskaya began to critically re-read *Capital* in an on-going effort to relate Hegel's categories from the *Science of Logic* to Marx's work. As was demonstrated throughout Chapter Nine, this re-reading was extremely productive. For example, Dunayevskaya problematized the relationship between technology and competition, demonstrating dialectically that capitalists do not pursue technological innovation because of competition. Rather, technological innovation is pursued as a mechanism to control and suppresses the revolt of the workers.[5]

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[3] Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London : Verso: 1993).
[4] Archive #1693.

Dunayevskaya spent the remainder of 1950 – 1953, philosophically speaking, in the realm of Essence. This statement is not made to denigrate the work on Form and Appearance. Quite the contrary; in the course of thinking about the money-form, for example, she was able to link the appearance of freedom to value.[6] However, as was noted at the close of Chapter Nine something was missing – the Tendency claimed that the 1950s were the age of "ultimates" but Dunayevskaya's philosophical reading of Marx appeared "stuck" in Essence. The 1953 letters broke through Essence and firmly rooted Dunayevskaya in Hegel's Absolutes. While it would have been tempting to simply try to work through Hegel's Absolute Idea and Absolute Method abstractly, Dunayevskaya immediately took her new insight to *Capital* and the form of revolutionary organization (the Party) implied by realizing a unity of theory and practice.

In relation to "the Party", Dunayevskaya argued that Hegel's Absolute Idea meant that the relations between leaders and members, between the places where the third layer "lives" and the leader "thinks", combine to form a whole, a totality. Practice meets theory and theory meets practice. However, this "meeting" or unity can only be effected by Absolute Method, that is, absolute negativity. However, absolute negativity is also the moment the subject is wholly and completely constituted, that is, the moment the subject is free. Dunayevskaya argued that Marx contained the Absolute Idea in his category of the Absolute General Law of Accumulation which could be negated (absolutely) by the revolt of the workers, who were organized in the first instance by the very process of accumulation. Significantly, what this implied, though, was that the workers do not revolt because of wages or working conditions (although these are certainly relevant); rather, they revolt in the cause of freedom. Hence Marx's focus on the mode of production separating mental from manual labour and alienation, even in the face of rising wages. This was the drive, the source of movement that Dunayevskaya identified in her second letter of May 20, 1953. For Dunayevskaya this impetus was the movement to realize a new society. However, if theory and practice remain separate and there continues to be a division between mental and manual labour, between rank-and-file and leader, it would be impossible to realize the Absolute Idea. Thus, organization and dialectics imply each other from the very moment of Dunayevskaya's discovery. For her, freedom itself is at stake. In her subsequent work she would remark that Marxism is either about freedom or it is about nothing.

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[5] Archive #1703.
[6] Archive #9230.

Dunayevskaya's own "philosophical moment" resulted in an ongoing project to recognize and defend the humanist project within Marx's writing and the critique of capitalism. Significantly, much like Lenin before her, Dunayevskaya returned to Hegel to reveal Marx's method. The result of her engagements with Hegel was that Dunayevskaya revealed a historical continuity between Hegel and Marx that directly challenged the facile notion of the "young" vs. "old" Marx so present in much of the post-Marx literature. This "philosophic moment," she recounted later, related to her 1953 study of Hegel and the resulting insights marked her writing and thinking in the ensuing decades. Rediscovering Hegel in Marx, for Dunayevskaya, was to recover Marxism as a philosophy of freedom, a real emancipation that would result in what Marx himself called a new "humanism." For Dunayevskaya, this was "absolute negativity as new Beginning."

Our "red thread", then, was Dunayevskaya's determination to keep the "human element" central to all of her analysis – the humanism that presented itself in Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and lived on in *Capital.*

The Significance of Dunayevskaya for Our Day

The title above paraphrases one that Dunayevskaya proposed for a collaborative work on *Capital* with Grace Lee Boggs in 1949. This final section highlights some of the recent research inspired by Dunayevskaya's philosophy while also drawing out a brief research agenda that emerges from this extended engagement with her early philosophical development.

It was noted in Chapter One that Dunayevskaya's work has had little impact on academic Marxism. It is not unusual, for example, to pickup a text such as Tony Smith's *The Logic of Marx's Capital* (1990) or Lydia Sargent's collection *Women and Revolution* (1981) or Tom Rockmore's *Marx After*

Marxism (2002) and find no reference to Dunayevskaya, although her work clearly has a great deal to contribute to each of these very different projects.[7] Further, while she received recognition from important critical scholars like Marcuse and Fromm, you will not find her referenced by the icons of the New Left, such as Perry Anderson or Ellen Meiksins Wood.[8] In recent years, Dunayevskaya's influence and philosophy have increasingly been acknowledged in scholarly writings. For example, Kevin Anderson drew on Dunayevskaya's work and philosophical insights in his important work on Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism; they continue to be important to his subsequent research projects.[9] Dunayevskaya also appears prominently in the work of the Marxist economist Andrew Kliman, an active participant in the "new value" debates around Marx's concept of value and what is termed the "transformation problem" in Marxian economics.[10] Turning toward critical or radical pedagogy, the ground-breaking work of Peter McLaren specifically cites Dunayevskaya as an inspiration; moreover, critiques of McLaren's work are proposing a very interesting reading between Dunayevskaya and Hannah Arendt on the question of freedom.[11] And, more frequently in recent years, one finds Dunayevskaya referenced (though perhaps not engaged) in unexpected places such as Nick Dyer-Witheford's *Cyber-Marx.*[12]

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[7] See: Tony Smith, *The Logic of Marx's Capital : Replies to Hegelian Criticisms*, SUNY Series in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1990); Lydia Sargent, *Women and Revolution : a Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Boston : South End Press, 1981); Tom Rockmore, *Marx After Marxism : the Philosophy of Karl Marx* (Oxford, UK.: Blackwell Pub. Co, 2002).

[8] See: Perry Anderson, *Arguments Within English Marxism* (London : Verso, 1980); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism : Renewing Historical Materialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995),

[9] See: Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism : a Critical Study* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Rosa Luxemburg, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson, *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004).

[10] Alan Freeman, Andrew Kliman, and Julian Wells, *The New Value Controversy and the Foundations of Economics* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004); Andrew Kliman, *Reclaiming Marx's "Capital": A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency*, The Raya Dunayevskaya Series in Marxism and Humanism (New York: Lexington Books, 2007).

Even so, all of these examples, which admittedly focus only on North American scholarship, do not take Dunayevskaya as the object of their study; nor do they set out to answer the questions that derive from her work. I do not say this to dismiss the work these scholars are pursuing; I believe that each of the projects cited above are very important. Rather, what I want to close with is a very brief examination of the types of questions and research project that would evolve from treating Dunayevskaya's philosophy as the object of study and pursuing the logical contours of her framework in the context of present-day capitalism. With this in mind, I pose some of the questions and observations that emerge when one is engaged particularly with Dunayevskaya's 1930 – 1955 philosophical development.

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[11] See: http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/pages/mclaren/; Eduardo Duarte, "Critical Pedagogy and the Praxis of Worldly Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 40, no. 1 (Feb2006).

[12] Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx : Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (Illinois : Illinois University Press, 1999), p. 63. Admittedly, Dyer-Witheford could also be held up as an example of the "worst" kind of reference. Although he lists Dunayevskaya in such august company as Lukacs, his references and bibliography only cite CLR James.

Projecting Dunayevskaya: a Future Research Agenda

In a new foreword to *Marxism and Freedom,* Joel Kovel notes that Dunayevskaya "was … a multiple dissident – from the established power East and West, as well as from the main tendencies of the Left. She was a tendency unto herself and took her sustenance from the lineage of the dialectical tradition that passed from Hegel through Marx onto Lenin."[13] The real strength of Dunayevskaya's work, which is very apparent even in its earliest stages of development, is the attention she paid to what capitalism is. For example, Dunayevskaya did not just assert that Stalin's Russia was state capitalist; instead she set out to answer the question what Stalinism is. And she was relentless in reposing that question to those who disputed her analysis, particularly the bureaucratic collectivists. Today, it is easy and common-place to assert "neoliberalism" as both a descriptor and explanation for global capitalism; however, if we take Dunayevskaya's assessment of Stalin's Russia seriously, we cannot accept the assertion without asking "What is neoliberalism?"[14] If we were to pursue this question, as Dunayevskaya theorized the nature of the Russian state and subsequently the nature of capitalism as "despotic plan", we would propose a series of questions: What is the class nature of neoliberalism? What are the production relations, that is the human relations, of neoliberalism? Have these relations changed? Are there transitions apparent? And, perhaps most importantly, where (in which revolutionary subjectivities) do we locate revolt and struggles for freedom? Moreover, if we return to Dunayevskaya's state capitalist analysis as she conducted it in the context of the Russian state a more troubling picture of the post-1989 world potentially emerges. Again, I would pose this as two related questions: Does 1989 mark a transition in global capitalism? Or, is it the case that we are witness to the "hardening" of the "despotic" plan of capital? In essence, we may speculate (in the Hegelian sense) that Stalin's state was the proto-type for the neoliberal state of the 1990s and the new millennium. We can examine the human relations of production that define the period so easily named as neoliberal; however, this examination will effectively mean that we must not find ourselves caught in the glare of the market (which Dunayevskaya reminds us is only a reflection of production relations) that would only compound the errors of post-Marx Marxism. In this instance, Dunayevskaya's reading of Lenin's *Imperialism* is fundamental to a new engagement with what we are calling "neoliberalism". The relationship between finance capital and the drive to monopoly was very clear to Lenin, but has lost much of its dialectical reading in recent scholarship. In a very real sense, then, our project -- if we project Dunayevskaya's analysis to today, which she always exhorted us to do—would have us pose a new question, the "Globalization Question".

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[13] Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom*, 2000, p. xiv.
[14] Interestingly, David Harvey has recently produced a book entitled *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, the first chapter being "Freedom's Just Another Word…". See: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2005). However, while Harvey goes to great lengths to say what neoliberalism does, he tells us little about what it is.

Of course, that question and the series of questions it flows out from, is tentative. But it is important to stress that it is the product of engaging Dunayevskaya's philosophical project as it developed in the 1930 – 1955 period.

At the outset I argued that Dunayevskaya was a critical thinker who makes an important contribution to our understanding of the historical development of capitalism and the conditions under which it may be changed. Over the course of the preceding Chapters I demonstrated how Dunayevskaya's philosophical orientation was formed and refined by the interaction of objective conditions and subjective cognition. The result, by 1955, was the emergence of an intellectual orientation that challenged orthodoxies and reclaimed Marxism as the philosophy of freedom.

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